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June 2007

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COMMENT

"GO OUT and get hammered tonight – all your best comments are written with a hangover!" Every now and again Sutty raises his head above monitor level and utters words of wisdom that are so, er, wise that only a fool would ignore him! And even though I have my moments of utter stupidity I'm no fool so yesterday evening after leaving the office I swung by the offie for a bottle or two of inspiration...

Funny thing is, Sutty's words – not just the end result of his advice – actually did help with inspiration. It may sound soft to all you lot out there but there's a certain pressure to come up with a comment every month. Okay, so it's nothing like the pressure involved in, say, going for a title but every month this little red panel has to be filled – whether with nonsense or sage advice is open to debate – and filling it ain't always easy.

Pressure can work both ways – it can spur people on to bigger and better things or the sheer weight of expectation can cause things to go in the opposite direction. Of course, to be a champion you have to be able to use pressure to your advantage as Ben Townley demonstrated by over-turning a three-point deficit going into Detroit to lift the AMA Lites Eastern SX crown.

Slightly more debatable is James Stewart's ability to soak up stress – remember how many mistakes he made last year trying to deal with Ricky Carmichael? This year, without RC on his back for a full series, Stewart's had more breathing space and wrapped up the SX title with a round to go but you can't help wondering if he'd have managed it so easily – if at all – if the Makita Suzuki rider hadn't gone into semi-retirement.

While I was talking to Mark Eastwood a few weeks ago he explained that when he was a fully-fledged HRC factory rider he put too much pressure on himself and always felt more relaxed when he was able to do his own thing. And there's a lesson to be learned here – especially by parents of aspiring schoolies. If you earn your living from riding then, fair enough, results are all-important and if you ride like a nodder then you have to be prepared to deal with the flak that's coming your way. For everyone else it should be fun.

So if you're going to the line worried about having a bad ride you really need to stop, have a hard think and remind yourself why you started riding in the first place. And it's far, far worse if your son or daughter's going to the line worried about letting you down. After all, childhood is priceless and parents have already had their own – they've got no claim on their kids'...

Sean



Antonio Cairoli in action at last year's British GP

COUNTDOWN!

It's less than four months until the world motocross championship returns to the UK. Here's everything we know about the event so far...

EVEN THOUGH the British motocross GP is less than four months away not much in the way of pre-event information has been forthcoming to either the press or public. What we do all know is that the date is definitely set for the August Bank Holiday weekend – August 25/26 – and the venue itself – Donington Park – is also a dead-cert.

While Donington has held several top-level motocross events before – most notably the Shell Advance International (on the infield) and KWSMX series (on a track at the rear of the circuit) – this will be the first time the MX world championship has visited the permanent road-racing venue.

The circuit for the MXGP promises to be a Sun City-style affair based within the confines of the road race circuit with viewing limited to the outside of the specially constructed track ala Matterley Basin. However, this year's race will have the added bonus of a unique tunnel system allowing easy access from one side of the track to the other saving weary spectators a lengthy trek.

The circuit will of course feature all the usual big-air step-ups and floaty tabletops which British GP-tracks are renowned for around the world and the pits should be based in the permanent pit lane that normally houses such road racing greats as Valentino Rossi and Marco Melandri.

We had hoped to sneak a hastily photographed version of the top-secret track map into this month's magazine but not even our undercover super-sleuth could get access to the right people to get this job done.

With Donington Park being based on the Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire border within three miles of the M1/M42 interchange the venue is certainly well located and within easy reach for almost everyone. But if you don't fancy driving there you'll be pleased to know that the East Midlands International Airport is situated closer to the track than the motorway!

Donington and its staff are used to handling huge crowds of 100,000 people plus at events like the MotoGP and Download music festival so there should be no problems getting in or out of the venue and hopefully the lengthy queues of Matterley and Matchams will long be forgotten.

That's pretty much all the info we have for now – we do know more but if we told you we'd have to kill you – so keep a close eye on our website **www.dirtbikerider.com** for the latest information.

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WIN! WIN! WIN!

Tom Church's M2R race kit

THIS MONTH'S cover star Tom Church is currently Marshfield's premier 25-year-old motocross racer and at present is sitting pretty in fifth place in the Maxxis MX2 British MX Championship on his Molson Holdings-backed Kawasaki. To celebrate Tom's recent moto win at Landrake (but not his Canada Heights DNF –– hiss boooo!) we've hooked up with TC to give you the chance to win his rather rare M2R race kit. Yay!

And all you've got to do to win it for keeps is answer this stupidly easy TC-related question. What team does Tom Church race for?

Is it:
A) Molson Kawasaki
B) M2R Kawasaki
C) Molson Camelsaki
D) Molson Canadian Lager with a slice of lime – mmmm refreshing

When you think you know the answer either hook up to **www.dirtbikerider.com** and follow the comp link or write it down on the back of a postcard, sealed envelope then send it to us – along with your name, address and a daytime telephone number – to TC Comp, 12 Victoria Street, Morecambe, Lancashire LA4 4AG.

The first correct entry scraped from the depths of TC's sweaty Sixsixone skidder after the closing date of June 8 will win his M2R kit.





Catch X-Fighters from the comfort of your own sofa

© alexschelbert.de/Red Bull Photofiles

X-FIGHTERS TV!

IF YOU missed Mexico and don't look likely to 'aul your Aris to Dublin, Moscow or Madrid you can still catch all the action from this year's Red Bull X-Fighters tour – from the comfort of your own couch!

Red Bull are working with ITV4 on a series of X-Fighter specials with the first one due to hit our screens in just over a week's time.

Sticking strictly to chronological order, Mexico kicks off the series on May 19 at 6.30pm followed by Dublin on June 9 at 8.30pm, Moscow on July 14 at 6pm and Madrid on August 11 at 6.30pm.

And if you still can't manage to be glued to the box at the appropriate time the good news is the whole shooting match will be repeated in August and September.

So tune in, turn on and flip out!

MEDIA MOGUL?

FANCY FORGING a career in extreme sports media? How about rubbing shoulders with the best off-road riders on the planet?

If the answer's a resounding 'yes' then you could do a lot worse than checking out the Nike 6.0 Media Apprentice programme. Aimed at aspiring media moguls aged between 16 and 21, the initiative will pluck one talented, passionate person out of obscurity and tool them up with all the necessary kit to make it in one of the most challenging industries around.

The successful applicant will get the chance to learn from some of the most respected cameramen, journalists, producers and designers in the action sports industry and win some top kit.

For more details and how to enter go to **www.nike6mediaapprentice.co.uk**

ALPINESTAR!

New boot keeps your toes twinkling...

WE ALL hate riding in the mud and gloop of winter but good weather brings its own problems – think dust, frequent filter changes and your ickle toes getting all hot and sweaty. There's not a lot you can do about the first two but how about this new vented Tech 10 from Alpinestars to solve the problem of perspiring pinkies?

Okay, okay, it's not a late April fool and Alpinestars haven't actually crossed a sandal with an MX boot – it's actually DBR reader Fraser Law getting in touch with his artistic side after smashing his tibia at a Northampton MC event at Crick.

"Faced with a month or so in plaster and presented with a nice fresh white canvas I decided to paint it to look like a boot," he explains. "I also got fed up with everyone you meet asking 'how you did it?' so I thought by making it look like a motocross boot it would be kind of obvious!"



Seriously, it's toe joke!

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On the cover and contents main: It's Tom times two! Everyone's favourite Marshfield Muncher took his maiden Maxxis race win of '07 at Landrake – very well done TC! (Sutty)

WIN! WIN! WIN!

RC replica RM250 must be won

HE'S A living legend, the winningest rider in AMA history and even though he's semi-retired Ricky Carmichael is still the fastest man in motocross – and now we've got a RC replica RM250 two-smoker up for grabs.

We've teamed up with Suzuki GB to offer one lucky winner the chance to get their mitts on a brand-new RM250 with RC's Team Makita graphics, One Industries seat cover and gold SM Pro rims. We tested it in April and according to Tony Marshall the RC rep "pulls hard from right down low and keeps on ripping through the range" – just the thing for die-hard two-stroke fans.

The competition kicked off in our May issue, continues this month and then signs off in July. All you have to do is send in your answer to each month's Suzuki-related multiple choice question and keep those fingers crossed.

Each question requires only one correct answer – this way if you miss one of the competition issues you can still enter but, even better, if you get all three mags you'll get three separate shots at winning the RM250!

And, as an added bonus, readers can also hook up to our website at www.dirtbikerider.com where they can follow the competition link to find a fourth question – yep, that's yet another chance to win!

You can either wait until the July question and stuff all your entries into one envelope or just send your entries in one-by-one – all we ask is that entries are submitted on official entry forms (no photocopies or computer scans etc).

So don't miss next month's DBR for your final chance to win!



QUESTION #2

Which Belgian legend won five world 500cc titles for Suzuki?

A) Roger De Courcey ***B) Roger De Coster***
C) Roger De Rabbit ***D) Roger De Ramjet***

Answer

Name

Address

Daytime Tel

E-mail

Cut out this coupon and send it to us at ***'Win a Suzuki', DBR, 12 Victoria Street, Morecambe, Lancs LA4 4AG.***

Closing date for entries is ***July 12.***

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WIN! WIN! WIN!



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STEPHEN SWORD

BACK ON IT!

AFTER A YEAR ON THE SIDELINES SWORDY'S BACK IN THE SADDLE AND ITCHING TO GO RACING...

WORDS BY STEPHEN SWORD PHOTO BY RAYARCHER.COM

IT'S BEEN one year since my accident and I'm finally back on a bike! Hurrah! My fitness has come a long way from one month ago but I will be preparing myself for a bit of arm-pump and some sore muscles after riding. You end up finding new muscles that you never knew were there!

With all that in mind I'm obviously taking it easy. In my head I think I can do two 40-minute motos no problem but I know that's not going to be the case. My physio is in the process of making me a brace for my ankle – he's custom fitting it so it will go inside my boot. The guys from Fox Europe have been helping me a lot with boots and they will also get my boot custom-made to ensure I get maximum support.

I can't believe we are already into May. The year is just flying past but for me it's only just starting. Over Easter I popped down to Marshfield to watch the Mike Brown Memorial race on Good Friday and they had a huge turnout of riders and spectators. Rich T was there sorting it all out and giving me plenty of stick and a few of my mates were riding so it was good to catch up with them. Some had hangovers from the night before but they all gave it 100 per cent in the eight-minute plus one lap races. Thorpey was there riding good and Spud Wheeler was up to his old track-cutting tricks!

Things have been pretty busy at home as we moved house a few weeks ago. We did all the packing and moving by ourselves – it was a mission! There are still loads of boxes waiting to be unpacked but I was in the garden all weekend with a small digger, levelling it out and putting in foundations for a wall and getting the area ready for the patio. Being Scottish and all that I've decided to do a lot of the work myself – some of the quotes I got were unbelievable! The old man is coming down to help me lay the patio and build the wall and I can't wait to get it finished as it's all mud at the moment.

As I'm writing this I've just had a call from Rich T. He's giving me stick and calling me a tight-arsed Scotsman because I buy cheap biscuits and he wants me to get some Fox Selection in for next time. I told him he'd have to wait until I start racing again so I can buy them with my bonus money. Anyway, he needs to lay off the biscuits for a bit as he's getting chubby!

The weather is awesome at the moment so I took advantage of it and got out on the golf course. I haven't played for six weeks so it took me a few holes to get going and cost me a few lost balls. I'd like to get out and play a bit more but I'm so busy with training and going to the physio that I don't have the spare time and there will be even less now I'm riding again. But to be honest getting back on a bike is a much bigger buzz!

Of course, everyone wants to know when I'll be racing again – I haven't set a date as such but if everything progresses well then sometime in June is possible. I'm not worried about getting up to speed but being able to maintain it for two 40-minute races could be tough – but however long it takes I will be very much looking forward to my first race back. What I miss most of course is winning although it will be nice just to be part of things again.





Win or Bust! It's a topsy turvy season for Brad Anderson

MMX UPDATE

Ando DNFs hand thumper lead to Smith as Rowson takes control of the U21s

Words and photos by Toby Fuller

ROUNDS TWO and three of the British four-stroke and U21 championships took competitors on a tour across southern England, calling in at Kingsteignton in Devon and Blaxhall in Suffolk.

After a DNF for defending thumper champ Brad Anderson at round one there were points to be made up and he did exactly what was asked of him in Devon, winning both motos with relative ease. His main challenges came from Jordan Rose – who's looking better and better every week on the Albion KTM – and Danny Smyth but on the day it was Wayne Smith who rose to the top of the standings.

A warm spring day greeted the competitors at Blaxhall and it looked a foregone conclusion when Anderson topped qualifying by over a second. However, never predict motocross – the Pioneer Yamaha came to a halt in race one handing the win to Rose ahead of the 250F Swift Suzuki of Sean Hamblin who fought from the back of the pack to take a well deserved third.

Race two and Brad took control early on and this time there was no stopping him as he raced to his fourth win of the season but another runner up position gave Rose the overall victory. Hamblin was third again – good enough for second on the day – with series leader Smith joining them on the podium.

In the U21s Kawasaki's Ray Rowson is the man in form. After 10 different race winners in the class in '06, Rowson showed good speed and maturity in notching up another three race wins from four. Jamie Law looks like Rowson's main challenger this season and took a race win in Devon to stay within striking distance after three rounds. The pair are well clear of Kristian Whatley who currently lies third in the standings.



Ray Rowson leads the Under 21s for the Molson team



WIN! WIN! WIN!

50 Nuts 3: Bust a Nut

BUST A Nut is the latest and greatest instalment of minibike madness from the same people who brought you 50 Nuts and 50 Nuts 2: More Boobs! This 60-minute movie continues where those two left off with plenty of poolside party action, gorgeous girls and tough men doing massive tricks on tiny bikes. The movie makers claim Bust a Nut is better than Jackass and Girls Gone Wild put together – more like girls gone jackass wild on 50s!

Retailing at just a tad over 20 nicker, 50 Nuts 3: Bust a Nut is available now from The Videohouse – **www.thevideohouse.co.uk** – and all other great off-road emporiums. But if you'd rather win a copy than buy one then we've got good news for you because we've teamed up with The Videohouse to give away five copies of this magnificent minibike movie in our free to enter competition.

All you have to do to win a copy is answer this simple question. Which production company is responsible for making the 50 Nuts films?

Is it:
A) Clutch Films
B) Dutch Films
C) Butch Films
D) Hutch Films
E) Crazy Ted's Film Company

When you think you know the answer head over to **www.dirtbikerider.com** and fill in the form or write it – 'it' being the answer – along with your name, address, pant size and a daytime telephone number on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope. Then send it to Videohouse Comp #2, DBR Magazine, 12 Victoria Street, Morecambe, Lancashire LA4 4AG. The first five correct entries drawn after the closing of June 8 will win a DVD.

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extreme sports dvds

GORDON CROCKARD

FALSE START!

GORDY'S GP CAMPAIGN HASN'T EXACTLY GOT OFF TO A FLIER THIS YEAR BUT THE ULSTERMAN'S STILL STAYING POSITIVE

WORDS BY GORDON CROCKARD PHOTO BY SUTTY

YO! YO! Summer's here...happy days! Dust galore and changing filters hand over fist where practice is concerned. De-knobbling tyres too is quite a certainty but at least I don't have to endure the hateful washathon that practice would bring any other time of the year.

Northern Ireland has always been my favourite place to reside and I have often thought that if the weather was better it would definitely be the best place in the world. Well in the last month the sun hasn't stopped shining and for sure it cheers even the most miserable sad sacks up. Training, practice, living – everything seems more attractive and much less of a chore.

I've two pet donkeys at home who usually live in the field at the house but now they hang out in the garden and graze on the grass. It's perfect for keeping the lawn short. I'm even thinking of renaming them – Briggs and Stratten I think is the best choice for their new names. No need for a lawnmower with those two around and it suits me as cutting the grass always made me feel as though I was years ahead of myself. It's the sort of job I picture myself doing when I'm old, retired and living off the memories of my younger days as a GP motocrosser.

Saying that, I'd have a hard time remembering April as a GP motocrosser as I've not made much impact on the 2007 world series as yet. Now that it's May hopefully all of that will change. I started April with a cold and a tough opening round at Valkenswaard in Holland – where 11th was the best I could do in moto two – turned out to be the only points-scoring race I've had in the last month.

Lyng was the weekend after Holland and beating Big Ken was all I could think about. Going into the event I knew this was a sand track and Ken being from Belgium was going to possibly make it harder for me to claim victory over him. Well I got huge arm-pump in the first race and I put it down to being so fixed on the idea of winning. Focussing on the track and aiming to ride it at my best is my favoured approach but I guess I got caught up in dreaming of the glory of victory. Still, I came out closer to the championship lead so I'm happy and realistic about being British champ again.

In the second race I had a big push on to pass Brad Anderson in the closing few laps and in the heat of battle I damaged my knee, quite badly to be honest. I tried my best to get it in good enough shape for Spain the following weekend but really I was fighting a losing battle. I dislodged a small piece of bone from my knee and also tore cartilage at the rear of my knee and these two bits of debris have been jamming up the joint and obstructing movement. When I attempted to ride in Spain I simply couldn't. The track was in the worst condition anyhow for dodgy knee riding with ruts everywhere.

I left Spain knowing I was going to have a tough decision to make on whether or not I should attempt to ride in Portugal the next weekend. I was working on the theory that Portugal couldn't possibly be as wet or rutty and maybe I could ride better. But once I got to Belfast, had a scan and spoke with the knee surgeon I decided it wasn't going to happen. So I watched the races on TV which is never easy when you feel you should be there too. Thankfully I then had a free weekend which I really needed in terms of recovering with my knee.

I'm writing this just a few days before the GP at Mantova and I'm hoping to be good for the race when it comes on Sunday. I raced there in 2000 and enjoyed the track loads so I'm really keen to see how it rides on the four-stroke.

While at home I've viewed some old videos including the 1985 British 500GP from Farleigh Castle – what an inspiring show. The man of course was Thorpey and that race is one of many that made him so loved by the fans. Makes you wanna twist the throttle and pretend you're DT! Everyone has their own heroes and he was one of mine!




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Roosted!

When it comes to getting a start shot it's a bit of a no-brainer really – standing in front of a full Maxxis MX2 gate can be dangerous, standing behind it is, well, much safer...as long as you watch out for the roost!

Photo by Andrew Ferguson




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BLARNEY

WORDS BY STEVIE MILLS PHOTO BY JAMIE HUDDLESON

RED HOT!

MAKE A DATE WITH TRAVIS AND THE GANG AS RED BULL X-FIGHTERS ROCKS UP IN IRELAND

GLOBAL WARMING? Don't know what you're talking about! My guess is that the current heatwave we are experiencing is down to the fact that the hottest event ever to grace these shores is only a couple of weeks away! Oh yes, Red Bull X-Fighters on May 26 at Slane Castle promises to be the event of the decade for extreme sports fans in Ireland. An evening of celebrated Irish rock bands in medieval Slane Castle will provide a unique setting for X-Fighters. This is a one-off event with Travis and crew on a world tour – Mexico City, Slane Castle, Moscow and Madrid. If you're lucky enough to have a ticket I will see you there!

The Ulster series is in full swing and as anticipated the main protagonists Tommy Merton and Wayne Garrett are having a right old ding dong. Tommy made the running during the first few outings but came unstuck at Ballykelly over the Easter two-day meeting as he tried to get on terms with Martin Barr who dished out a lesson in how to ride a MX2 bike in the Open class. Tommy's DNF has passed the lead of the Ulster Open series to Wayne Garrett with Tommy second and Mike Sinton moving into third after a strong performance at Ballykelly.

On the British championship front Gordy is keeping his eye on the ball with consistent results and is trailing Billy Mac by a mere six points – here's hoping the Newtownards man can collect title number four in 2007. Only 48 points separate the top seven riders in the MX2 class where Dixon Yamaha's Martin Barr has proved that if he gets a good gate he can run top five – so there's the plan Marty, nail those starts! The only other Irish points scoring riders are Wayne Garrett and Robert Hamilton who are in 25th and 26th places after three rounds.

No conformation yet but we hear Robert will undergo knee surgery. Robert – who's known for his lightning starts and determination – was showing good form with Embo's Yamaha squad. Let's hope he can make it back before the end of the season in time to do a deal for 2008.

Stuart Edmonds opened his account in the DEP Challenge series with a superb third overall. Riding his CCM Motorcycles/TM 125cc smoker, the Dublin lad has confirmed his credentials as a possible title contender.

Moto-One Racing's Graeme Irwin quickly made a name for himself during the early Grade B events, taking the chequered flag in flamboyant style and clocking up laps some four seconds faster than his nearest rival. And round one of the Irish national championship at Desertmartin showed the potential of the Moto-One Team's latest signing – his second place to team-mate Wayne Garrett set the tongues wagging.

One week later Graeme – who has just turned 15 – won a round of the Scottish championship. I'm now wondering if team boss Phil McCullough will upgrade Graeme for a wildcard ride at the upcoming British round at Desertmartin. Speaking of which – if any of you Grade A racers are interested in trying your hand get in touch with the Cookstown club ASAP.

Irish championship MX2 racing is providing some very intense and interesting battles. Wayne Garrett's KTM heads the leaderboard from Merton while Irwin, Luke Wilde and Jason Garrett are in hot pursuit. Ride of the Day must go to Luke – after coming around outside the top 20 on lap one the Suzuki star blitzed through the pack to take third at the flag.

If Gary Gibson was disappointed with a mechanical failure that kept him from qualifying for the MX2 class he more than made up for it in MX1. Sixth in qualification, Gary went 3-4 in his first ever race aboard his Holeshot Motocross-supported Honda – good enough to put the young Ballygowan-based rider third in the series.

Karl Prestwood – the ex-GP racer and technician to the stars – has been involved in importing the now in great demand Leatt neck brace. "Rider safety is of paramount importance," reckons KP who's coming to Ireland for a try-before-you-buy Leatt testing event. The date is yet to be confirmed although it will be in May – check on **www.ulstermotocross.com** or **www.motocross.ie** or call me on **07733128500** for details in the near future.

Finally this month a big congratulations must go to young Andrew Reid on taking the overall in the Small Wheel 85 class at Desertmartin. Good on ya mate!

Stevie



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JONTY'S BOX

WORDS AND PHOTO BY JONTY EDMUNDS

BEEMER SCHEMERS!

WITH A FIVE-TIME WORLD MX CHAMP ON THE TEAM, EUROPE'S LARGEST MOTORCYCLE MANUFACTURER HAVE ARRIVED IN THE WORLD ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP

THE WORLD Enduro Championship looks set to change in a major way. Not because of new rules introduced by the FIM. Not because the series is planning on visiting Australia, Iceland or Estonia. And not because half of the world's top trials riders have decided to give the series a go. Nope, the WEC is set to change because BMW – Europe's largest motorcycle manufacturer – have joined the hunt for WEC glory.

Technically, BMW haven't actually joined the championship trail on a full-time basis just yet but the Bavarian company have certainly stepped forward with intent. And if the development of their new 450cc four-stroke Sportsenduro bike continues to go well possible full-time participation in the WEC in '08 could be on the cards. And that can only be a good thing for the WEC.

BMW's participation in the second round of the WEC series wasn't a case of 'they came, they saw and they conquered' but to be fair it was never likely to be. Instead it was more that they came with the definite goal of continuing the development of their new bike while competing in high level international competition. They didn't make wildly optimistic proclamations about how great their new bike was and how well they were going to do. Instead they efficiently and professionally went about the business of competing and learning.

BMW were extremely open about the fact that trying to get results certainly wasn't why they were participating in Spain. With the bike featuring numerous weird and wonderful technical features and innovations – many not seen before on an off-road competition bike – and with the 'project' still relatively young, 'racing as a tool of development' was the sole reason they were present.

The arrival of any new manufacturer into the WEC, like the arrival of any new manufacturer into any motorsport championship, always brings with it a certain amount of hype. But when the manufacturer in question is one as large as BMW the level of interest shifts into overdrive. BMW might well be a small player in the enduro market at present but as a big, big competitor in other sectors of the motorcycling market their arrival was greeted with the appropriate amount of interest and scrutiny.

What was encouraging about the BMW Motorrad Motorsport team's arrival in Spain was the way in which they were welcomed into the international enduro paddock. With a degree of uncertainty always surrounding the arrival of anything or anyone new, the general opinion of the paddock was that their arrival was most certainly good for the series. And with good reason too. With BMW's commercial and promotional reach spreading far beyond the enduro market, news of their new bike – and by association information about the World Enduro Championship – will now filter into the road sector. This ability to make the wider motorcycling world aware of the WEC is another of the plus points associated with BMW's arrival. In addition many see this injection of new blood as something that will keep the other manufacturers on their toes.

So what of the bike's performance? With development rider Sascha Eckert returning to WEC competition having been retired for two years and Joel Smets taking part in his first ever WEC event, the likelihood of stellar finishes was always going to be slim. So the team's day one results of 13th and 15th were pretty much par for the course really although the fact that both riders finished the day – and in the points – pleased the BMW top brass that had travelled to Puerto Lumbreras to oversee the bike's debut.



BMW'S WEC LINE-UP HANDS THE RIDING DUTIES TO SASCHA ECKERT AND JOEL SMETS

Day two didn't go quite as well as Smets withdrew from the event with an electrical problem. But with Sascha finishing in 17th position the fact that at least one of the two bikes had reached the finish was of obvious relief to the team.

BMW's participation in the second round of the WEC was a case of dipping their toe into what for them was previously unexplored waters. Always planning to 'learn and then return', the Beemers will make two further WEC outings this season – the next in Italy at the end of May followed by the final round of the series in France in mid-September. From there decisions will be made regarding the bike's future and the possibility of a full scale attack on the World Enduro Championship.

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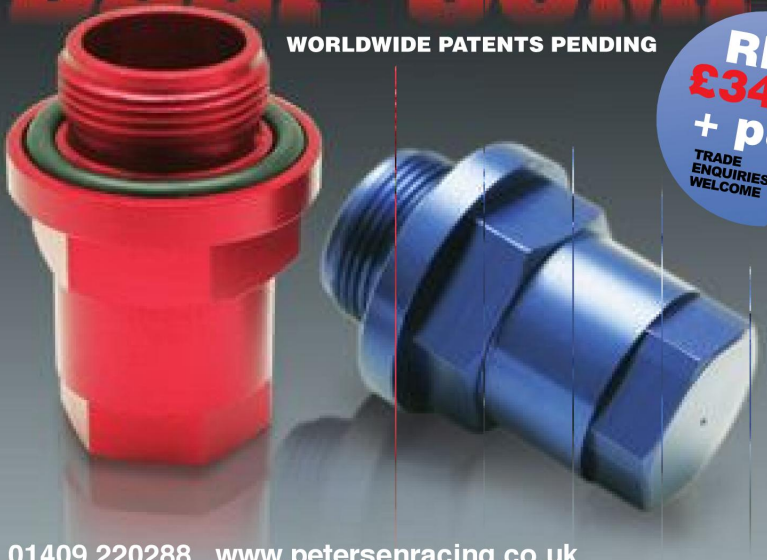
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LEATT BLEAT

Last Tuesday I bought a Leatt Brace and raced with it for the first time today – what an excellent item. I spent about 20 minutes mid-week adjusting the fit to suit and ensuring that it fitted correctly with both body armour and helmet. Racing today I didn't even notice I was wearing it. It does not restrict movements that you would normally make whilst racing in any way whatsoever. So here's to Doctor Leatt!

But if such an essential item of safety equipment is likely to be made mandatory it needs to be made more affordable as £300 is a great deal of money. I'm sure the company would argue that it is a small price to pay considering the possible outcome of a serious accident and also that a decent aftermarket exhaust is more expensive and they'd be right of course but I feel that neck braces will only get a look-in if they're priced to be an 'as well as' purchase rather than an 'instead of'.

Julian, via email

I personally wouldn't have said that £300 is over the top for a Leatt Brace when you consider the amount of development work that's gone into making it such a great product for the reasons that you've already mentioned.

The trouble with protective products like knee braces or the Leatt Brace is that you'll never know if they've actually saved you from serious injury or not which is why people are sometimes unwilling to fork out big bucks for them. Hopefully more people will see the possible benefits and purchase protection.

GOLDEN BROWN

Isn't it great to have Mike Brown back racing in the UK for CAS Honda? I really like watching his hard charging style out on the track but when he's in the pits he comes across a really nice, genuine bloke who doesn't mind signing posters or chatting to his fans.

What I can't understand is why he's racing MX2 in Britain but MX1 in the GPs, surely it can't be doing him any favours as he's always swapping between the two sizes of bike?

Bryan, Bedfordshire

Honda really want to claim back the British MX2 title and Mike's their man for the job while at GPs he's there as a back-up rider for Keeno.

LAW FLAW!

With all the bureaucracy flying high about the registration of off-road bikes do the city slickers not see a huge flaw in their proposed system of bike identification?

The problems stem from the nasty bunch of socially offensive criminals. If it is proposed to reduce the amount of illegal riding that takes place over the countryside and common ground and add to security of ownership of off-road bikes, the suits need to identify the profile of the culprits.

In short the legitimate riders generally ride where permission is given at organised events or private ground where allowed. Those of us who ride legally will be the only people to adhere to the rules yet we're not the problem.

The illegal riders will remove any identification of the bikes and continue as always adding to the soiled reputation of the good folk who remain passionate and law abiding, so the big question is 'what's the point' as nothing will be achieved.

Rob (size 11), South Wales

Thanks for the letter Rob you've certainly raised many very valid points – your size 11 Muc Off is in the post!

DESPERATE DAN!

Right, what's happened to Walker? Has he gone underground to escape the fuzz or is he in training in a secret location for the next crappy reality TV programme or is he being a lazy swine and scratchin' his arse all day?

Anyway my point is the sooner the big man gets back to writing technical articles the better as the likes of myself (myself being a beginner with not a lot of tech know-how) need the help of the G-man to keep our pride and joys in good running order and paying some wrench to do it is out of the question. So give him a rise, bribe the boys in blue or kick his chunky butt.

Dan, Lancashire

Whaddya mean 'what's happened to Walker?' He's always looked like that! Seriously though you'll be glad to know that he's put down the Rich Tea biscuits long enough to guide you through the perfect cockpit in this month's Walker's World.

FAN MAIL

I just want to say how much I've been enjoying reading DBR while I've been laid up at home with a broken leg. You guys have been keeping me sane and after reading your mag I can't wait to get out riding again! Thanks a lot guys!

Richard, Somerset

'ANDY DRAWER

Hey my name's Andy, I'm 14 years old and I'm from Scotland. Apart from girls I reckon the best thing in the world is motocross! I own a 2005 YZ125 and it's totally awesome.

I've been riding bikes since I was five and I just can't get enough of them so I thought I would draw you guys a picture of my all-time favourite rider Marc De Reuver. I was hoping you could publish my drawing in your next issue of DBR because I'm a big fan of your magazine and never miss an issue.

Andrew, Scotland

Cheers for the drawing Andy and we'll see what we can do about getting you Marc's autograph!



PRINT N' PIMP!

I've just started racing schoolboy motocross and I was wondering if you could let me know if anyone sells those iron-on shirt logos that all the top riders have on their race shirts and where I can get them from.

Nathan, Oxfordshire

*Hi Nathan, welcome to the best sport in the world. If you want printed logos on your jersey there are two ways in which to do it. Either buy a Factory Effex iron on logo kit from **ultimatepursuits.co.uk** for £19.99 or get in touch with a custom shirt printer who'll also be able to add your name and number on the rear. Sweet. We've used **www.evoke-concepts.com** and **www.concept21design.com** in the past and both companies do a tip-top job at the right price and with a speedy turnaround. Good luck!*

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Daring to be Different!

Top-flight motocross is a young man's game where four-strokes rule the roost – so how come a 36-year-old on a 250 two-stroke is sticking it to thumper pilots half his age?

Words by Sean Lawless


© Robert Austin

On home ground at Canada Heights in the DEP Challenge


© Jack Burnicle

Honda five-tonner action in 1990


© Alex Hodgkinson

Mark's last year in GPs came in 2003

"OI, SEAN!" Bleary-eyed and ever-so-slightly hungover I emerge from the comfortable shadows of Swanley train station into the bright Kentish sun to be greeted by another bright Kentish son – only this one's hanging out the door of a VW Transporter with a big grin plastered across his face.

At 36 years old it has to be said that Mark Eastwood's looking pretty good for a man who's spent three-quarters of his life banging bars in the rough, tough world of motocross. And despite the fact he's now pushing 'elder statesman' status he's still dishing out riding lessons to rivals half his age in the Maxxis British championship.

So what's his secret? How can someone who should, in top-flight motocross terms at least, be smoking a pipe and smelling faintly of his own urine be running top six in the MX1 national series – and in a world of 450 four-bangers be doing it on a 250 two-smoker?

"A lot of people still ride to my age – Malin's still doing testing and stuff – but they don't race. Most ex-riders still ride a bike but they don't race because either they're not earning any money from it so financially it's not worth putting the effort into it or they've got older and don't want to put the effort into it or they just get scared and maybe can't ride the way they used to when they were younger.

"I haven't got scared, I'm still trying to ride the same way I did when I was younger and I'm still prepared to have a go at almost anything and I think that's why I'm still going quick."

But on a two-stroke 250 against the massed hoards of 450 four-strokes? Surely that's a major disadvantage in this day and age?

"I don't think I personally would go any quicker on a four-stroke. I'd be a fool to ride a two-stroke if I was faster on a four-stroke. The fact of the matter is that maybe I could go a second-a-lap quicker on a four-stroke for one lap but I know that the way British championship tracks are – the way they got rough last year – that over two 35-minute motos I'm going faster on a 250 two-stroke.

"You can see it halfway through the moto that no-one's trying on a 450 anymore, no-one's making passes. They're a heavy bike, they're a lot to handle and there's very few people who can ride one flat-out for 30 minutes and really push them to the limit. For sure in the British championship there's only four or five guys who can do that and the rest of them are getting tired and they can't keep the pace up and when the track gets rough that's when the two-stroke comes into its own.

"The bumpier it gets the more I smile and the more fun it is to ride as well. I know from riding 450s over the winter that as soon as the track gets rough you don't want to ride them anymore. A two-stroke can be a disadvantage on starts – you have to get everything perfect. For sure with a 450 you can maybe not get the revs quite right and it's still going to go pretty good to the first corner but with a two-stroke you have to get a good jump and get good gear change and good drive. But it's been all right and apart from Canada Heights where I got hooked up on the first turn I've been away well within the top 10."

Standing out from the crowd is not something Mark's ever been afraid of doing as his curious career curve illustrates. He learned to ride at the age of four but waited another five years before his race debut in 1980 on a YZ80. A decade later he was scoring points in 500 GPs, came oh-so close to lifting a British 250cc title in the mid '90s and saw out the old millennium with a HRC factory deal. Then he buggered off to race in Spain for three years, crossed the Atlantic and had a crack at the AMA Nationals for a further two seasons before he rocked up in Britain again at the start of '06 and wasted no time in establishing himself in the MX1 top 10.

"I was there [Spain] three years and raced three seasons. The first year I just raced in Spain and did all the motocross and supercross rounds and the next year I got back into GPs again because the supercross scene kinda fell apart a bit and there wasn't as many races. And then in 2003 I was still based in Spain and did another full season of GPs. It was great, I loved it down there and I've still got my house and I still try and go there as much as I can.

"I did America just because I wanted to do it before it was too late although, if I'm honest, it was probably a bit too late anyway. I try not to have regrets but maybe I should have gone to America when I was 25 – I would have been stronger and dealt with the heat better and would probably have got a good ride out there.

"I went because I wanted to race in America and I wanted to race the Nationals because the tracks looked so good. I'd ridden GPs at Budds Creek and Unadilla and I knew how good they were and I just wanted to get out there and have a go while I was still going pretty fast. There was nothing happening in GPs, they'd stopped the prize money at the end of 2003 which was the last year I did GPs.

"I felt pretty confident I could get in the races – I'm still going good now but if you leave it too late then you get slower and you're maybe not prepared to do the big jumps or whatever. Luckily that hasn't happened to me which is why I'm still going strong in the British championship."

Chatting to Mark in the kitchen of


Vic n' Mark

© Jack Burnicle

Family Affair

Born to race

Motocross is as much a lifestyle as a sport so when your dad is bona fide scrambling legend Vic Eastwood you're pretty much destined for a career on two wheels.

"When I was growing up I didn't exactly feel under pressure because of who my dad was but for sure there were expectations. Wherever I went everyone knew I was Vic Eastwood's son so they expected me to be good. If I had a good result it was like 'yeah, it's Eastwood's boy' and if I didn't it was like 'he should have done better than that'!

"But to be honest I just switched off and it never really bothered me. I'd go to a lot of places and my dad was more famous than me but so what? He was good..."

And Mark also had big brother Scott – aka Totti – to contend with as well. "Scott was awesome as a rider and, to be honest, had more talent than me and rides a bike better than I do but he didn't have the motivation or the get-up-and-go and you certainly need a lot of that for motocross.

"He's still blindingly fast now – I'm having top 10s in British championships and when we go down to Spain he's only a second or two a lap slower than me. He's 40 and he's hardly hanging about."



Shattered dreams

Close but no cigar

"My best British championship season was probably '93 – that was the year I made it to the top and was finishing top three every week and at the end of the year managed to win at Elsworth beating Kurt [Nicoll] and Robbie [Herring] and then won again at Hatherton to beat Robbie for second in the championship by two points.

"I started the year riding for Suzuki with Rob Hooper – I'd ridden for him in '92 and had a really good year and we had really good bikes but the 1993 production Suzuki was the biggest pile of rubbish you could ever put your leg across. They'd made this box-section frame that used a bad metal – we called it the chewing gum bike because the thing got longer every moto!

"It didn't handle and we tried everything with it and after seven months I quit the team and was going to retire until the start of '94 but then I went out and rode my brother's Honda and I was like 'this is easy, this is what motocross is all about'. I was having a good year on Suzuki but it had knocked my confidence – especially in GPs – so I went to Honda and that's when I won the last couple of championship rounds and had some real good GPs at the end of the year as well.

"I'd always trained but that year for the first time in my life I trained really hard and was ultra-fit because I wanted to make the jump to the top flight. To be honest I just muscled that thing around the first half of the year but the trouble is after you've hit the deck a couple of times and you don't know why it starts to eat away at your confidence – no matter how fit or strong you are you do eventually start going slower."

© Jack Burnicle



Career highs

The best of times...

"It's got to be Brou in '97 when I holeshot and led the first moto for a lap before Everts and Tortelli came by and I rode round with them boys for quite a while. The second race was even better – I holeshot again, led for a lap, Tortelli passed me and I sat with him for two laps and had five or six seconds over Everts in third.

"It stayed like that until about halfway when Everts passed me and then for the final few laps I went at it with Bolley who just got me so I had a fifth and a fourth. Any other day I'd have probably just got on the podium with that but this day it was the same five guys in the top five and Fred got third and I got fourth.

"I never won a GP but that day only Everts, Tortelli and Bolley beat me overall – and they all won world titles. I always rode the most difficult class and, for sure, if I'd been riding 500GPs in those years I'd have won some GPs."



Mark returned to British championship action in '06



Career lows

The worst of times...

"I'd say '95. I'd finished second [in the British championship] in '93 and should've finished second to Kurt in '94 but the bike stopped at the last round at Hawkstone in the last race when I was leading so [Paul] Cooper got second by a couple of points. In '95 Kurt didn't race the British championship and I thought the title was mine – I was definitely the fastest guy – and I was leading by about 25 points midway through the season.

"We were testing forks at Joyce Green three days before Elsworth and I lost the front end in a corner while I was cruising and I fell onto a track post and it snapped my collarbone. So I couldn't race Elsworth and it was three motos, 20 points a moto and Cooper won them all. With three rounds left I couldn't make the points gap up on him unless he DNFed and he didn't.

*"After that in '96 I had a knee injury so that went out the window and I finished fourth and in '97 I said 'b******s to it, I want to concentrate on GPs' and didn't pay that much attention to the British championship from that point onwards probably until now."*

Eastwood Racing's Swanley shop his ongoing passion for motocross is crystal clear. And it's this continued love of MX that holds the key to his longevity at the sharp end of what is undoubtedly a young man's sport.

"I've probably enjoyed the last few years of my career the most. I think before I put too much pressure on myself – I wanted to do so well so bad when I was younger I almost made motocross too important and because of that I probably didn't ride the best I could.

"As I got older I learnt it doesn't really matter too much to be honest, it's just motocross. Sure, you want to be world champ and do the best you can but you can only go out there and give 100 per cent – if you do that every week then you've got to be happy with that. I think when I learnt to do that I learnt to enjoy my racing.

"In '97 I had a really good season in GPs and just went there and rode my own race and did my own thing. It was awesome, the first year that I really felt like I was a consistent top 10, top five finisher rather than just a regular point scorer and everyone else in the top 10 knew I was there with them.

"In '98 and '99 I had the factory ride with Honda and I had two good seasons but because I wasn't doing my own thing again I probably put too much pressure on myself. But those years were really good for me, riding with Stefan [Everts] on the same team and training with them – I learned a lot."

Mark's unconventional approach to racing combined with his pure enthusiasm for motocross has meant his career has taken a number of unusual twists and turns – perfectly illustrated by his decision to move to Spain in '01 and then try his luck in the US.

"Spain was brilliant. I'd been doing British championships for 14 years so it was something completely new – different tracks, learning another language – and the same again with America, once again I just decided to do something different.

"Some people just race British championships all their life and never think to do anything different. Okay, so maybe not everyone's in a position where they can but I was so I did. I've done the Spanish championship, the American championship, the British championship and GPs so I've had a go at quite a lot.

"And at the age of 30 I took up supercross seriously and did 14 races in the Spanish championship all through the summer. For sure I'm not scared of doing something different and that's important to have the motivation to keep on riding."

And having the self-belief to do his own thing brings us nicely back to 2007 and his conviction that racing a two-stroke – daring to be different if you like – is the right and proper thing to do.

"I hate to say it but people are like sheep and if someone's winning on a 450 they've all got to have one. Fair enough, I understand that people who are in teams have to have one because that's what the manufacturer is giving them but a lot of these other guys that are buying their own bikes are getting a 450 and they can't use the full potential of it.

"I firmly believe that 50 per cent of people in MX1 would probably have better results on 250 two-strokes but there's no way they're ever going to ride them because they haven't got enough self-confidence to ride something that's different.

"In the British championship everyone's on a 450 and you've got to have a lot of belief in your bike and yourself to be sat there on something different. I've done a lot of testing and I believe I'm riding the best bike for me and I will get the best results on that bike.



© Robert Austin

"I'm not as fast as I used to be and that's another thing – people remember you being up the front and think if I was on a 450 I'd be back up there but I must be five seconds a lap slower than I used to be. If I was 10 years younger I could be five seconds a lap quicker on a 250 two-stroke and be up the front."

So what does the future hold for Mark? Well, for starters he's thinking about starting a family with long-term girlfriend Mandy – "it's a bit late in life compared to most people but I've been pretty busy all my life and never really had time for that" – and there's also a hint that he may be getting ready to hang up his boots. Although if he does it'll be because he wants to, not because he has to.

"If I keep training and keep riding I feel like I can go on forever! I don't think I'm going to because I don't think I want to. But if you keep training and don't get scared you can carry on..."



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Modern motocross is a dramatically different scene to the sport 20 years ago and Swift Suzuki, the new team with big dreams, typifies the changing times...

SIGN OF THE TIMES!

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson





SIGN OF THE TIMES!

THE WORLD is changing and motocross with it. Back in the day our sport – even at the highest level – was about lads racing round a field on Sunday afternoon after sweating it out pounding the pavement in the week. Heck, back then the epitome of luxury was to have even one mechanic who wasn't just your best mate on the road for the craic. Just 20 years ago even a world champion was running round in a 15-foot van with a bed over the garage.

Team rigs hauled by tractors have been the norm now since the turn of the millennium but as costs escalate, the traditional view of financing the show is poised to enter a new age. Step forward Team Swift Suzuki!

"I was as critical as anyone when Luongo stopped the prize money for the riders but I can now see which way this is going," admits Mark Banks, GP ace of the '80s and deeply involved – along with brother Julian – in the day-to-day running of the East Anglian group of car dealers established by granddad John Snr and headed by father John, the 1968/69 world #2.

"I said the same as everybody, the riders are doing this and not getting paid but my riders are getting paid and they can earn good money. But you have to raise the money from outside. Take Formula One – how much prize money do they get paid for winning the race, nothing hardly.

"The sport of motocross can only continue this way. There's just no other way to finance it. Suzuki were wanting to get the racing effort going in the UK and the team is a good promotion for the bikes but the finance comes from the car division and the Japanese bosses of Suzuki in the UK are looking at it as a whole with brand awareness and, of course, the Swift."

And the cost of running a team – with by far the largest budget ever assembled for a UK motocross team – for a year is still only equivalent to three days of the Suzuki Swift Ronaldo advert in England. That puts our sport into perspective!

But what's the link between lads racing bikes around a field and a list of outside sponsors which also includes Relentless, Tazbar, Radio Accessories, Kromex and European Dispersions?

"The John Banks Group has Suzuki car main dealerships in Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich and we know from the showrooms that the Swift is for the 17 to 30-year-old market – a trendy, fashionable car which is the one to have in that niche. And motocross and our other sponsors also fit into this market – the 16 to 30-year-olds living at home with income to spend. Relentless is Coca Cola's energy drink, Tazbar is an online auction – the seventh largest site in the world.

"We take the cars to the British championship rounds and to the GPs on the continent which are not so far. Suzuki are wanting us to promote the Swift in the UK so we're not going to drag the car down to Portugal and Bulgaria.

"And it's already showing response. There's still an awful lot of people out there who don't know Suzuki make cars let alone a trendy car like the Swift and there's even those who know the Swift but don't know about bikes.

"Kromex and European Dispersions came on quite late but they make the ink which goes onto Coca Cola and Red Bull cans. What they get is they can invite their customers all over the world to a weekend out, coming to the race with a team they can identify with.

"You know, the guys who own these firms would never go to Germany or wherever to meet those people and spend three days with them just sitting in a hotel whereas with us they can have a hotel conference with their partners on Friday, then bring them to the GP and enjoy the VIP treatment. Radio Accessories are the same but they also have a direct input into the infrastructure by providing us with communication around the track."

But where did the impetus come from to get involved in motocross again at all? "Elliott is of course the inspiration but ultimately he's not being treated any differently to anybody else. And you see from the fact that we have brought Sean Hamblin over from America that this is a serious business. We're not dealing with our money, we're dealing with the money of our partners who are covering the cost to do it and they have to feel they are getting value for money.

"The problem in motocross is that too many people undersell themselves. We put a price on everything from the beginning and said that we wouldn't dip below it. It was no different to selling cars – dealing with big fleet companies. But none of it would have been possible without Luongo. He's done a good job and if we'd still been parked in a field we wouldn't have been able to sell all this."



Signing top Yank Sean Hamblin shows Swift Suzuki mean business



But Banks is not the only famous name involved. Team manager is Jonathan Wright – Kawasaki's man on the 125 GP stage nearly 30 years back who simply disappeared overnight. Where has he been all these years?

"I stopped when I was 21 and I'm now 48. I was double British champion – 125 and 250 – in 1980 but the next year I seriously broke my ankle and could hardly walk, just like Stephen Sword now.

"When I did it, I went straight from the circuit to hospital. Gordon Hadfield, the best surgeon in the world at the time, came and operated on me. And when I came to after the operation he told me the good news was that he'd just seen someone who had got over this but the bad news was that it had taken him 20 years. He told me straight and even today I find it difficult to walk on uneven ground and the following morning I struggle to walk at all.

"I had started off, just like everybody else, doing it for the sport then it became what I earned my money at but as soon as you're no good no-one wants to pay you good money for old time's sake.

"I've been around, watching. I don't think you ever drift away completely once you've been involved in motocross and I went with Elliott to the youth nationals for quite a few years.

"I have been director of a joinery company employing just over 100 people of whom I was one and now I'm doing property development on my own."

And Jonathan the tradesman actually fitted out the race truck. "The skeleton of this one was right. It was used last year by Tim and Tristan Reeves – the sidecar road race world champions. We stripped the inside out but the basics like plumbing and electrics were all there although, having said that, we have put in an extra two kilometres of wiring and it now has four inverters, six batteries, mains, a 10 kva generator, everything. We have full back up and no matter where we are, we can function."

Jonathan's business background is no handicap in his new job. "It was my job in the off-season to get the right people in the right places within out team structure and once the season has started it is man management – getting the best from everybody."

And, when he was a rider, Jonathan had the best teacher in the world – Alec (no relation) Wright. "The thing which I realised was that Alec had the finance to have a team at Kawasaki. If you were the best, you got hired and on the day you weren't, you were told that you were no longer wanted. And he told you straight.

"He was ruthless in as much as he took on people to do a specific job. You were told what you had to do – if you did it he was a superb bloke and if you didn't, you were out. If I have to do that, then I will do – 10 people's livelihoods rely on this team and if someone is not pulling their weight, the job of every one of them is endangered."

Heading the smooth transition on the technical front is chief mechanic Ian Browne – 21 years in the sport as mechanic to Mark Banks, Jeremy Whatley, Rob Herring, Billy Liles, Justin Morris and Jocke Karlsson and, more recently, chief technician at RWJ as well as



THE RIDERS

Sean Hamblin

The 24-year-old from Murieta, California, has been a regular front runner in the States for several years but was looking for a change of scenery. "I could have got rides in the States – not one of the greater rides perhaps but I had always hoped to be able to compete on the world scene.

"My wife Robyn and I came over in October and the deal with Swift Suzuki was the right one for me. The first thing which came home was the family atmosphere with the Banks family and it has not been such a hard transition being taken in as a member of the family. We actually have our own flat attached to John and Mary Banks' house which cements the family feeling.

"I'd like to think I'm here to stay. I think I have my act together a bit more here than I had back in California in the end. England reminds me a lot of Canada where I lived in 2000/2001 and where I met my wife. I always feel comfortable there when we go to visit my wife's family.

"We haven't really had time to do much sight-seeing yet – maybe we'll stay a little longer at the end of the year. I am here to race motorcycles and that has priority."

Elliot Banks-Browne

This is make or break year for the 17-year-old heir to the dynasty. "Last year was for learning and I hope I have done that. I got hurt at Hawkstone so the first two rounds of the British were not so good. But I was running top six at Lyng with 10 minutes to go and I need to be looking at top five or top six moto finishes now.

"In the world I want to qualify at all of the remaining GPs and score some good points. I had the speed and was running a good qualifying position at Valkenswaard but I got taken out three laps in. I have now learnt not to throw it away myself – like I did at times last year."





'80s ace Mark Banks



Wise words for Elliott from Jonathan Wright

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Elliott knows this is a crucial season for him if he's to make the cut as a pro

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being Elliott's dad.

"We have a very professional set-up, not just in our technical support but also looking after the sponsors and it is going to open up a lot of opportunities. There is no factory material for the 250 Suzuki yet but the structure is better. We can contact Sylvain Geboers at any time for help and Suzuki UK are open to us. All the way up the line there are people at Suzuki listening, passing on the information and knowing which direction we need to go."

And who are the rest of the staff? "Steve Henderson is race mechanic for Elliott and Chris Churchill for Sean Hamblin. Each do their own engines and suspension but I do the development work. Andy Deeks is the truck driver, who also helps out with everything at the weekend while Steve Fry is the cook – he does the frying so to speak. Cyd Wright, Jonathan's wife, does the catering too and, back in Bury, Jackie does the administration."

So the structure is there – and it's a structure which must be the model for others to follow if they are to survive in the long term.

Back to Mark for the final word. "We're not biting off more than we can chew on the sporting side. The goal is to establish ourselves so that we can go and sign one of the best riders in the world. We have the back up of Suzuki, all these high-profile sponsors and in year three we want to be in the running for the world championship."

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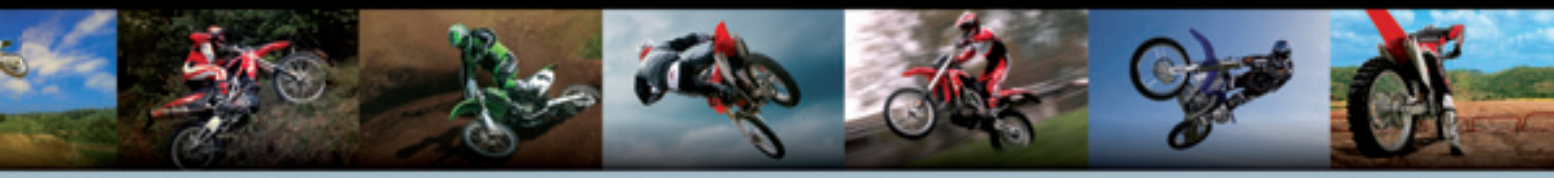
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2007 GP
PITS
FOOD
START
PRESS
BOCK
FINISH
RIGHT
LEFT
BILL
...SHE'S CLOCKWISE. TWICE AS MANY RIGHT-HAND CORNERS!!
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HMM...
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EARLY SATURDAY MORNING
OI! SOME BUGGER DUG UP THE JUMPS!
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putt putt putt
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BIG NEWS last month was astrophysicist Stephen Hawking's zero-gravity flight with NASA. Shortly after landing the 65-year-old professor dictated the following message to his many followers. "It was amazing, I could have gone on and on and on – space here I come." But what Professor Hawking fails to realise is how much more amazing the experience could have been had he been wearing some cool sunnies with a built-in MP3 player, or something.

I mean, there's nowt finer in life than being in a zero-gravity situation with a bunch of your favourite co-workers when no-one can see where you're looking and you've got the Arctic Monkeys blasting directly into your brain on full volume – is there?

So if I were as smart as Stephen Hawking I'd rustle up my credit card number then log myself on to **www.mx1.co.uk** and order a pair of Oakley Thump 2s in time for my next zero-gravity adventure. But I'm not that smart – I'm even smarter...

And that's why I'll be entering this awesome online competition that offers one lucky DBR reader the chance to get their head inside a pair of mx1.co.uk supplied Oakley Thump 2 sunglasses for free! All you have to do is head online to **www.dirtbikerider.com** and answer this simple question – or if you don't wanna log on to the interweb you can send the answer on a postcard to the address below.

Which of the following is NOT a genuine Stephen Hawking quote?

Is it: A) Equations are just the boring part of mathematics.
B) We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star.
C) I think computer viruses should count as life.
D) I would like a large Big Mac meal and a filet of fish for my wife.

When you think you know the answer log on to the marvellous **www.dirtbikerider.com** or send it to us (along with your name, address and a daytime telephone number) here – **Outsmart an Astrophysicist Comp, DBR Magazine, 12 Victoria Street, Morecambe, Lancashire, LA4 4AG.** The first correct entry picked randomly picked after the closing date on **June 8** will win a pair of Thump 2s.



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OPEN WARFARE!

Kawasaki join the big-bore off-road battle and their KLX450R is quite a weapon...

Words by Geoff Walker Photos by still-mx.co.uk

IF YOU'VE wanted to race a competitive Open class enduro weapon in recent years your best bet has been to buy European. Yeah, Yamaha, Honda and even Suzuki have all had a 400cc plus enduro bike in their range for the last few years but to be brutally honest none of the Japanese bikes come nearly as ready to race as the big-bore Austrian or Italian thumpers.

For 2007 Yamaha upped the ante with their race-bred, ally-framed WR450F which was a huge improvement on their previous WRs. And now – in 2007-and-a-half – Kawasaki have entered the fray with their all-new 2008 KLX450R which is as close to their all-conquering MX missile as any manufacturer would dare go for the off-road market.

At first glance the KLX kinda looks like a KXF but a KXF fitted with lights, side-stand, the world's longest front pipe and one of those crazy 18-inch rear wheels that MX bikes used to come equipped with back in the day. And



that's pretty much exactly what it is – the KLX takes the key components from the KXF and then adapts them for off-road racing.

Take the chassis and suspension for instance – the KLX utilizes both from the KXF. Okay, there's no Diamond Like Carbon coating on the forks' lower legs and both ends are tuned to soak up the more extreme going while minimizing rider fatigue but the units are otherwise identical.

And the motor's essentially the same too. The 450cc four-valve DOHC four-stroke motor is tuned to suit off-road terrain with plenty of torque to help riders find traction at all times. This torque comes from extensive testing to find the optimum characteristics to make sure as little power as possible is wasted through wheelspin.

Smaller steel exhaust valves replace the titanium valves of the KXF to help with exhaust efficiency and the flywheel is twice the


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weight. As well as hooking up better in slippery conditions there's another major plus point for the off-road racer – electric start.

While the magic button, battery, starter motor, larger fuel cell, lighting, side-stand and extra foot or so of exhaust pipe all add a few kilos to the KLX it's certainly no big-ass Bertha. The KLX weighs in at a very respectable 115kg – that's 15 or so more than the KXF – but with a certain amount of non-essential item removal it could certainly be a fair bit lighter still.

The weight issue with a bike like this will always rear its head but these bikes are what they are. The electric start adds quite a bit of weight but when you're stuck on a hill and feeling like you're hung out to dry you wouldn't swap that little bit of excess weight for the feeling you get from hitting the button, restarting and climbing to the summit.

The '08 KLX comes out swinging with the use of very racy motocross inspired

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PART PERFECTION?

Some of the features that go to make up the KLX are right on the money and some need a little attention – here is a quick look at the parts...

Exhaust header pipe
This helps with the power delivery and comes fitted with a guard. The guard will stop your boot burning but I would rather it stopped the pipe getting wrecked. It needs to extend lower to protect the vulnerable pipe.

Headlight
Best in class. Looks aggressive and modern.

Clutch
The action is superb and solid but the cable could get snagged on bushes.

Digital speedo
Great design and clearly visible. The speedo cable is prone to damage where it runs up the right-hand fork leg. Kawasaki could learn a lot from KTM's way of doing things in this department.

Side-stand
This is strong and solid in both its construction and spring action.

Electric Start
The KLX starts on the button every time firing up the bike super quick.

Brakes
The Nissin units have a good strong feeling both front and rear.

Grips
Bin 'em! They're hand rippers!

Tyres
They feel okay in the dry and dusty stuff where the motor's performance makes them feel better than they actually are.

Quick change airbox cover
A good idea and one that's necessary if the KLX is gonna keep up with the competition. The door needs better sealing though and a hinge action that puts pressure on a seal. The door is clipped into position and when unclipped comes completely away from the airbox. It's not the best...

Sump and engine guards
Adequate cover from stock but if you're going extreme get it covered.

Cooling system
Big radiators and a header tank are all you need.

Seat
The gripper material on top and smooth sides work well and the extra width – over the MX bike's seat – makes a big difference in comfort levels for those long days in the saddle.

Fuel tank
Eight litres doesn't seem like much but this puppy will do some big miles per gallon. No noticeable extra width and my hairy boys never came into contact with the high point of the tank at any time...phew!

Plastics
Smooth transitions along the bike and the side panels are sealed up to stop water from entering the airbox and battery unit. The holes that appear on the KXF rad scoops are not on the KLX – this is to stop debris entering and sitting on top of the motor.

Price
At £5445 including VAT the KLX ain't gonna break the bank.


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steering angles coupled with enduro specific suspension settings that are aimed at making this off-roader a demon in the woods, trails, mountains and deserts.

The green corner have really done their homework at the design stage and seem to have set out with a view to elevate themselves from their trail-orientated bikes to something that's competitive at every level and type of racing.

The KLX really is a good-looking bike. When I first laid eyes on the bike I was already picturing it fitted with a larger tank and navigation equipment for Baja-style desert racing. Then I thought about how it might look stripped to its bare bones for a WEC event. To think about a bike in this way you've got to know that the starting package is solid before any specific preparation occurs. While this bike looks like it has all the right gear for the job there's only one way to be sure and so it was time for me to take a leaf out of BT 101's book and 'grip it and rip it'...

With Renthal bars fitted as standard the cockpit immediately feels comfortable once lever and bar position are set. The levers are the same as on the KXF but the clutch has a really light but positive feel to it. This lightness comes from an inner actuating lever within the motor. The cable enters the motor at a different place to the KXF – due to the placement of the starter motor – and with the aid of the actuating lever the end result is a lighter feel at the lever.

The throttle has a light feeling too and the front brake lever pull is positive and strong – riders with smaller hands would need to move the lever a little closer to the bars from stock.

The seat is wider than on the KXF and feels very comfortable. The bar-to-seat-to-peg set-up feels good when sat down but as soon as I stood up I thought a higher bar was required. This is a personal thing and I agree that getting the pegs up and away from the ground for good clearance is a great idea.

Within a couple of laps of the Rushmead trail lap I stopped and made a couple of minor adjustments to the suspension to suit the technical going. Just five clicks off on low-speed compression and rebound on the rear shock with free sag set to 25mm and four clicks off the compression up front. These minor changes transformed the ride and really brought the bike to life. With the KLX clickers dialed the bike became active rather then reactive and felt lighter and more balanced through the trickier sections of the lap.

Turning is excellent. I'm not a fan of the way most 450cc enduro bikes deliver power through turns. The chassis and motor must work together to make the bike feel balanced and to be fair the KLX behaves itself in all but the very tightest of turns. This is not a bad reflection on the bike at all but the way the motor produces torque is amazing and this can make some tight turns tricky to take at speed without sitting the bike up.

The bike generally feels solid and steady at high speed and at a lower pace too. The rocks, roots and ruts provided a good overall chassis test and the KLX turned and burned in all situations. For a good indicator of how well balanced a bike is see how tired you feel during the first hour of riding – with the KLX my energy levels stayed high.

Good manners, easy controls and a comfortable riding position allow long sessions of saddle time. The motor is a great contributor to this package and this is the usual letdown with 450cc enduro bikes. Kawasaki have taken the 450 motor and worked hard to find a special blend of power – smoothness and tractability in each of its five wide-ratio gears.

To put it simply, this bike inspires confidence to play. The changes to the KXF motor to turn it into the KLX motor are pretty simple but they do the job of making long, smooth and tractable power and that's all you can ask for from any four-fiddy powerplant – especially when trees are involved!

So there it is. The 2008 KLX450R is here in very limited numbers. I had my doubts about it simply being a MX bike with lights but it appears the work has been done and this bike can stand out as a true off-road weapon.

Specs

KLX450R

Capacity:	*449cc*
Bore and stroke:	*96mm x 62.1mm*
Transmission:	*Wide-ratio five-speed*
Carburettor:	*Keihin FCR40*
Front suspension:	*Kayaba 48mm fork*
Rear suspension:	*Kayaba shock*
Front brake:	*250mm disc*
Rear brake:	*240mm disc*
Wheelbase:	*1480mm*
Seat height:	*935mm*
Dry weight:	*115kg*





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Water Torture!

If you thought this year's Spanish GP was wet you should have seen it two decades ago when Britannia really did rule the waves...

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle

THE RAIN in Spain falls mainly...well, actually, on motocross GPs! For a country of scorched scrubland, packed beaches and sunburned Brits, the weather can turn unseasonably bleak on the Iberian peninsular.

This year's Bellpuig GP suffered from a fortnight of rain prior to the race although the event itself – and especially the MX2 contest – proved once more how a track made treacherous by such storms can produce racing of captivating quality.

In 1984 the FIM moved their opening 500cc grand prix to Yunquera, in the foothills – okay, on 'the plains' – 20 miles outside the Spanish capital city of Madrid. Draped round a conical hill, the track saw wins for Andre Malherbe in 1984 and '85 and then missed out in '86 when the scheduled opener at Payerne, in Switzerland, was snowed off by biblical blizzards.

So the FIM hastily returned to Yunquera for the first round of 1987. Driving steeply up through the local village with reigning world champion Dave Thorpe, I just had to ask the bewildered Berkshireman to stop while I leapt out and photographed two storks that were nesting on top of the church tower. But the weather above their lofty perch already looked grey and grim and sure enough two days of snow, wind and rain lashed the surprisingly lush surrounding pastures.

The Motor Club Yunquera and their superb circuit were totally unprepared for such evil weather. They had no bulldozer on hand. Gallant fellows armed with shovels did their best but fitful Sunday morning sunshine dried the cloying mud into a congealed, spiteful quagmire!

Thorpe and veteran Swede Hakan Carlqvist wanted the show cancelled. Kurt Nicoll, fastest in Sunday morning timed training, didn't! They all knew the importance of a good start to a championship blown open by the retirement of Malherbe and reluctant departure of Eric Geboers, on HRC orders, to the 250 class.





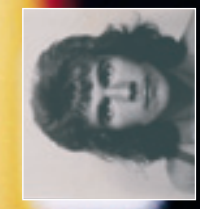
Thorpe, now the sole full factory Honda rider, faced the brand new aluminium-framed Yamaha YZM500 that had been successfully debuted at Le Touquet (yes, the beach blast was that important back then!) by Leif Persson. But Leif showed up at Madrid airport with a damaged wrist heavily strapped. And Yamaha had summarily sacked 'Carla' after seven years of loyal service and a world title on the air-cooled YZ490 'Motor of Death'.

Their second bike was in the hands of 500 GP debutante Jacky Vimond but the 1986 250 world champion had been dropped from the ceiling of a Parisian nightclub the previous September in a disastrous 'celebration' and shattered his spine. Only six months later, in these desperate conditions and far from fit, Vimond understandably struggled.

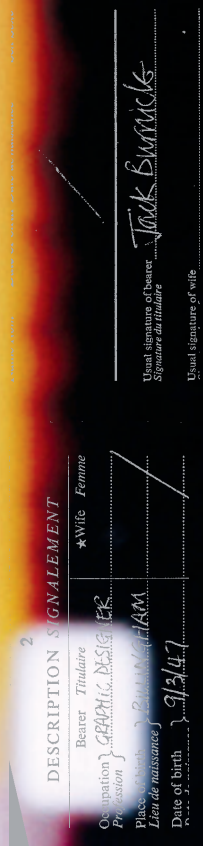
Just to rub Yamaha's nose in the sodden earth Carlqvist, loving his new private Kawasaki – the first water-cooled bike he'd ever raced – and so cool he skipped Saturday practice entirely, proved to be Thorpe's closest challenger.

Also in the frame were Georges Jobe (Honda) and KTM factory duo Heinz Kinigadner and Kees van der Ven. Amiable but aggressive Finn Kurt Lungqvist was on a YZ490 Yam alongside compatriot Ismo Vehkonen, an 18-year-old newcomer whose father Kalevi had once been a dashing Montesa-mounted Spanish hero and legendary drinker.

Other British contenders, enjoying such British conditions, were to prove major players. They included two Banks



***JACK BURNICLE** is the godfather (our words, not his) of British MX journalism. Born in Billingham, County Durham, to Bella and nutty (his words, not ours) musical genius Stan Burnicle, Jack was mad about cars and motor racing as a kid. At sweet 16 he got a motorbike, rode it to a local 'scramble' and was instantly, hopelessly hooked. Next time he went he was armed with his mum's Kodak Brownie camera. After art college he mixed life as a graphic designer, magazine art director, photographer and part-time art college tutor with motocross and photo-journalism. Now he's a commentator, painting pictures with words. He never did get a proper job...*



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IN HIS FIRST 500 GP, ISMO VEHKONEN (RIGHT) NICKED 3RD OVERALL IN A TIEBREAKER WITH HIS FINNISH COMPATRIOT KURT LUNGQVIST

Hondas (today, read Swift Suzukis) run by Elliott Banks-Browne's grandad John and featuring his uncle Mark and Rob Andrews. Max Anstie's dad Mervyn rode a KTM for his new mentor (and legendary drinker!) Graham Noyce and Shaun Simpson's dad Willie was on a Shirlaws Honda. North Yorkshire bad boy Jared Smith campaigned a Bikesport Kawasaki for excitable Geordie Gavin Linscott and Dave Watson was aboard a Katoom.

The day began brilliantly for the Brits with Banks, Thorpe, Andrews and Anstie leading the initial charge as Nicoll, Jobe and Watson got stuck in the first glutinous turn. Watson fouled a plug, Nicoll recovered forcefully to seventh at half-distance before a mud-caked radiator seized his motor and Jobe grabbed 14th and two precious points from Simpson.

Bulldog Banks, meantime, looked certain to secure his first grand prix race win until, inside the last three laps, he twice dropped his Honda. Thorpe, always so strong in adversity, pushed past for a fortuitous victory ahead of an elated Anstie, embraced by Noyce as he crossed the line grinning inanely through a mask of mud!

Another astute mud-plugger, Kinigadner started the final lap third before his KTM cruelly ran out of fuel. This allowed team-mate van der Ven on to the rostrum after a race-long pursuit of the resilient Andrews, whose team-mate Banks remounted a rueful fifth in front of Lungqvist, Jo Martens, Carla, Vehkonen and Jean-Jacques Bruno.

But poor Vimond fell right in front of signallers and mechanics and suffered the anguished ignominy of struggling to kickstart a lifeless YZM before retiring for the rest of the season (eventually reappearing at the final round six months later and mounting the podium).

"Mark was the only guy racing out there," admitted Thorpe. "When he re-passed me after five laps I'd settled for 17 points!"

Carla led an incident-packed second moto for 15 minutes before Thorpe, racing this time, swept past. The Englishman then crashed after



MINUS FRONT MUDGUARD, MERVYN ANSTIE SKATES HIS KTM TO A SENSATIONAL SECOND IN RACE ONE

half-an-hour and had to haul himself once more past the loudly cheered Swede who was riding an uncharacteristically restrained race on an easy handling Kawa that didn't blister his hands like that evil old works Yam!

Nicoll holeshot then had to stop and tighten loose handlebars before staging another rugged comeback, snatching fifth from Lungqvist on the final lap and just failing to nail impressive teenager Vehkonen.

Jobe had tip-toed shrewdly to third and a powerful late surge by Jared Smith carried him past Jo Martens to a career-best seventh. Simpson skated to a resourceful 10th and Andrews regrouped after a couple of mid-race mistakes to grab 11th from his brakeless pal 'Kini'. The rest of a British midfield battle disintegrated as Anstie fell, Laurence Spence sunk his Kawasaki in a mudhole and Stuart Coyle (Mitsui Yamaha) lost a handlebar grip. Burly Banks though untangled himself from two first-lap pile-ups to reach 13th place ahead of Dutchmen Gerard Rond and van der Ven.

The second race, drier and faster, had run two laps longer than the first. And Thorpe knew fortune had favoured the brave. "I had to out-think as well as out-ride Carla – he had some good lines and in these conditions was hard to pass. Then I had a big crash. She started to chop on a steep downhill. I just closed my eyes, grabbed the clutch and hung on as she threw me into the bank!"

Thorpe topped the rostrum in front of Carla and a third-place tie between Finns Vehkonen and Lungqvist. Ismo, in his first 500 GP, got the nod from Kurt (who would inherit Vimond's works Yamaha for the rest of the year) and a top 15 impressively packed with Brits Andrews, Anstie, Banks, Nicoll, Smith and Simpson.

But the Spanish 500GP sadly never returned to the plains of central Iberia and the storm-lashed storks of Yunquera.

COCK-ON!

Your motor's tuned and your suspension's sorted – now it's time to get your cockpit cock-on with Swordy's spanner-spinner Serge...

Words and photos by Geoff Walker

YOU CAN spend time and money getting your engine tweaked and your suspension sorted but almost equally as critical is finding a cockpit set-up that's good for you. It may sound like a no-brainer but getting your handlebars and levers in a comfortable position and making sure of smooth, precise clutch and throttle actions can make a big, big difference to your results.

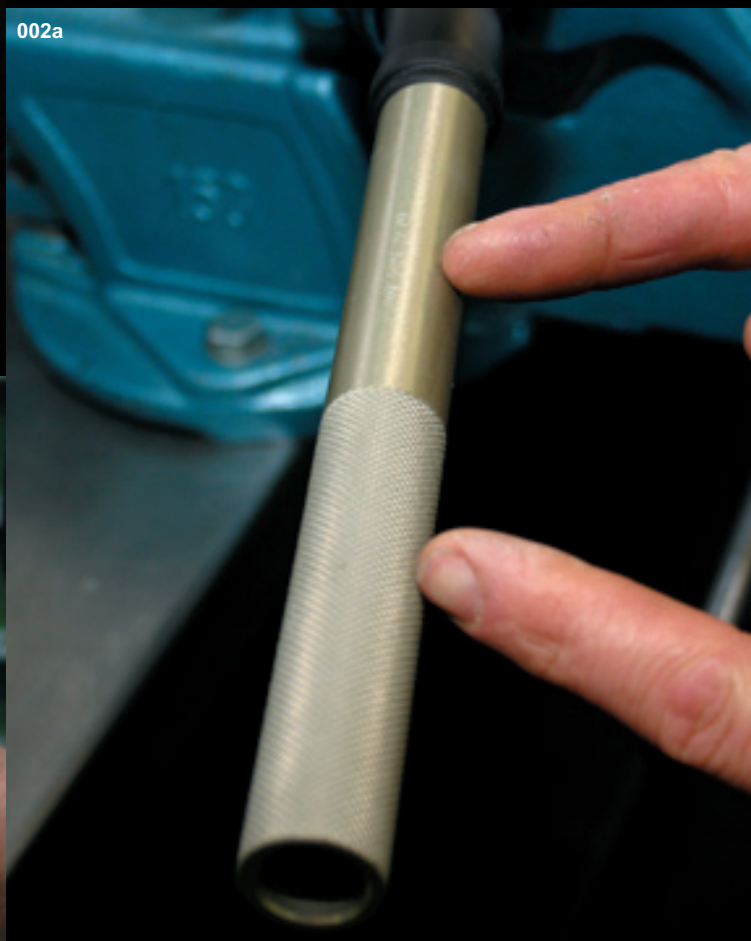
I took a few minutes out of my busy schedule to catch up with Swordy's new spanner-spinner, Serge Dijsselbloem, to prepare this step-by-step guide to the ultimate cockpit set-up to take to the startgate. The time spent in prep of this part of the bike ensures the rider has confidence in the bike so it should not be overlooked.

With a little bit of time spent in this area we can all have great feeling controls and a balanced set-up in the cockpit, making a tough day at the races just a little bit easier. The cables and levers should be serviced and cleaned before this assembly. If the cables are damaged or not running smoothly, replace immediately and oil with your favourite lube – Serge loves the Motorex Joker 440 Universal lubricating spray. The parts, lubes and tools required are shown.

Here is your guide to the perfect set-up to get your cockpit cock-on...


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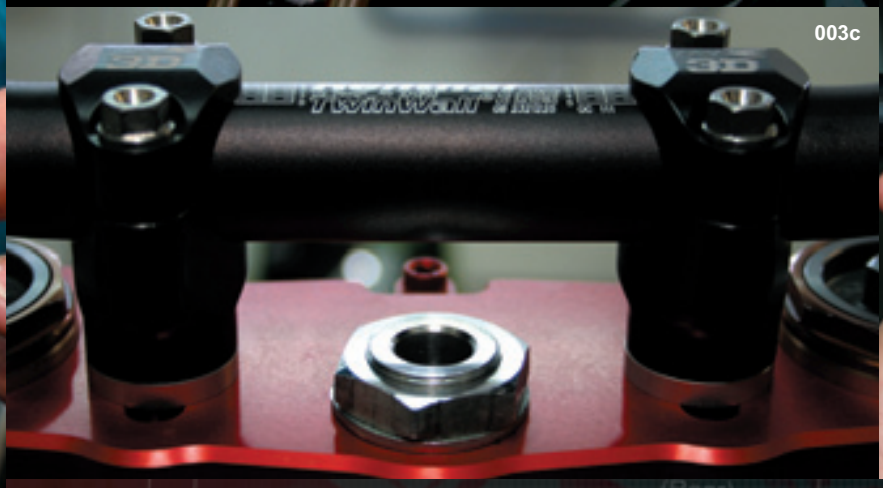

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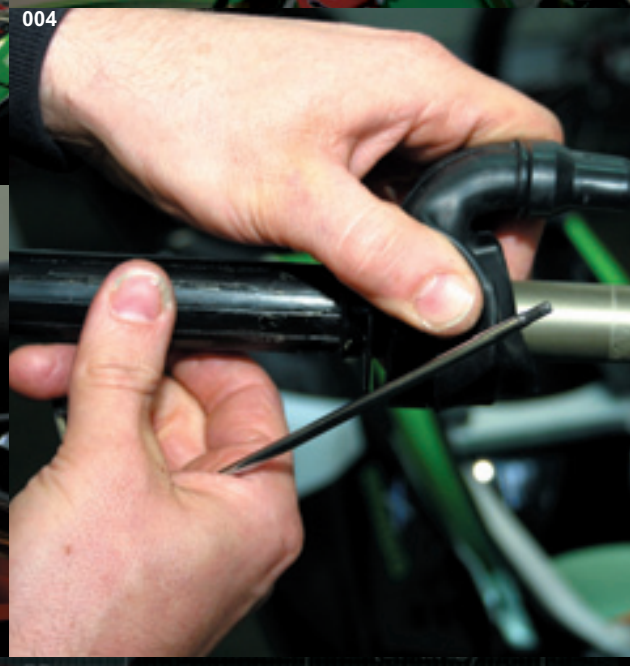

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001 Clamp your bars in a vice with paper towel or cloth to protect the metal. Take a sharp knife and trim the stickers off the bars. Clean any excess glue from the bars with brake cleaner.

002 Serge takes a t-bar and moves the inner bar plugs further into the inner bar. These plugs are there to stop crud from getting into the Twinwalled part of the Renthal bars so they have to stay in there safe and sound. With the plugs moved along a little further Serge makes life easier for himself when the grips are fitted as there is more room for excess air, stopping the end of the grip from splitting.

003 The bars can now be fitted into the mounts. Grease the clamp bolts and fit onto the bars as shown. The clamps can be fitted hand tight and then lined up.

Serge sets the bars 1mm to the left to allow for the throttle tube fitment and the bars follow the angle of the forks for Swordy. The clamps can be tightened down to 25 N.m making sure that the gaps are the same at the front which will allow the gap to then be the same at the rear clamping area.

With normal bars you should tighten the front of the clamp down and then do a final tighten on the rear of the clamps.

004 The throttle housing and cables are now fitted into place. Serge uses Allen bolts in the housing as the standard phillips head screws don't like the high abuse life of constant loosening and tightening week-in, week-out. The lubed cables should feel smooth and the inside of the tube is sprayed with a little bit of Joker 440 just before fitment. The housing and tube is slid into place and a gap of around 1mm is left at the end so the tube doesn't snag up on the bar end.

005 The grips are now fitted to both sides. Serge cuts a small piece of insulating tape

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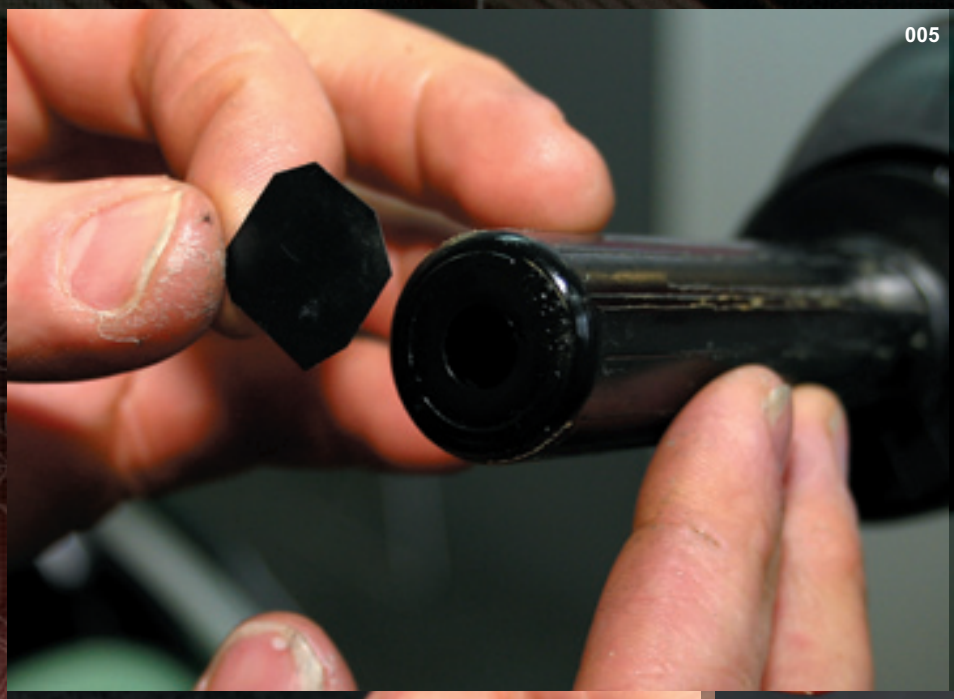
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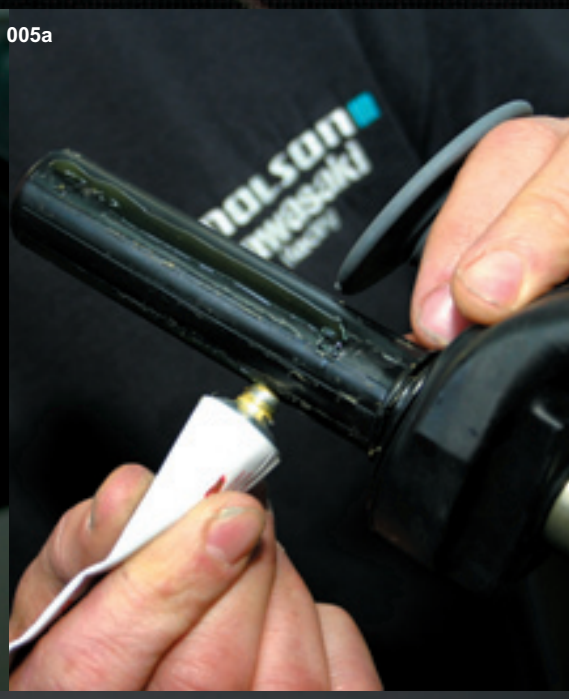
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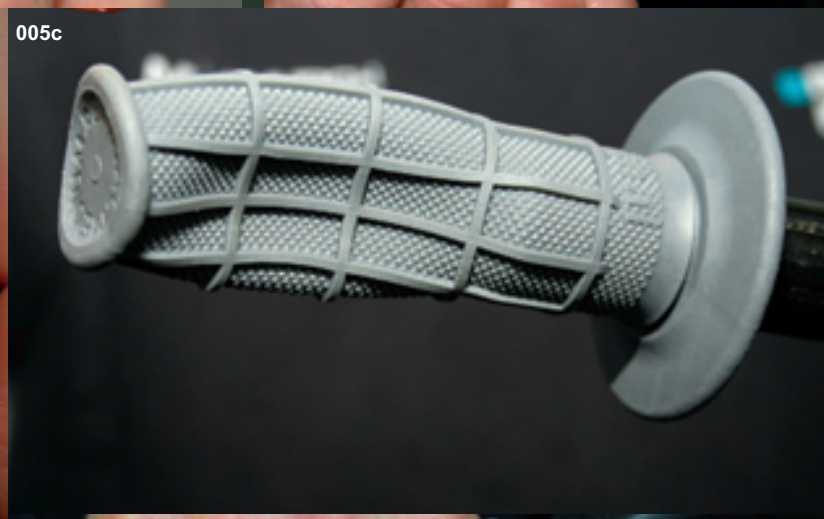
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005c



006

to cover the hole on the end of the tube. This prevents the grip glue from entering the inside of the throttle tube which would make the throttle stick.

The glue is applied in three lines along tube or bar and then a little ring of glue is put onto the open end of the grip. Serge squeezes the grip to get the air out and then slips the grip on while turning it to spread the glue evenly on the inner surface of the grip.

006 Front brake and clutch/hotstart levers are now fitted into place. The front brake is set with the lever being lined up in a straight line with Serge's fingers to the point of pull on the lever. This is the part of the lever which is curved to fit your fingers. If the levers are fitted this way it cuts down on blisters and ensures rider comfort.

The clutch lever is set in the same way and Swordy runs his levers in a very neutral position as shown. The torque setting for the clamping bolts is 10 N.m.



006a

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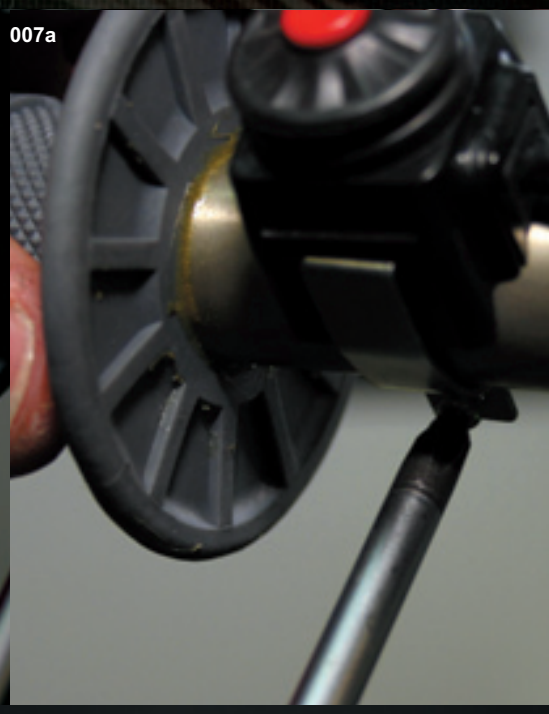
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007


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007 The kill-button is next in line and Serge fits it on the clutch side away from the grip. The screw is fixed from the back side to keep it away from the rider's leg. The kill-button cable is run neatly along the back of the bars and at two points on the bars Serge fits two laps of insulation tape to hold the zipties which hold the kill-button cable in place.

The hotstart cable runs high from the Sunline lever set-up so Serge and the rest of the Molson team run a small piece of carb overflow pipe with a ziptie through it as a cable support. This is a simple solution to the cable running high above the bars.

008 The last port of call is the wiring of the grips. Serge goes for wire from TMV products and double wraps the wire in two places on the grip. The first point is in the groove closest to the flange and the second place is beside the last rib of the grip. The wire is wrapped and twisted into place with the special pliers.

The tails of the twisted wire are cut short and are pushed up into the rubber body of the grip making a neat and tidy finish. These are the kinda tips which can make a difference to your day as a length of twisted wire digging into your hand while you are in the middle of the first moto is not good – there's only despair coming from down that particular road!

So there it is. The perfect cockpit? Serge reckons so... Now go get your tools and make your steed a pro zone.

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Giant Killer!

There's no doubt that British MX1 champ Ken De Dycker has the speed to win GPs – the question is has the big Belgian got the fitness to go the distance?

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson


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Aimh


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IONDA



BRITISH CHAMP Ken De Dycker is arguably the fastest motocrosser in Europe, if not the world. It's second nature for him to do things on a bike which less intrepid rivals would not even dream of trying but the 22-year-old from Leuven, just to the east of Brussels, has an Achilles heel – to keep it going for two times 40!

"He's not fit!" "No-one can ride like that for a full moto!" "You know he's going to come back to you before the finish!" The wisecracks are never-ending but Keeno knows he has to prove them all wrong – and he's determined to do it!

"Of course it's not easy and I'm six foot four and 14 stone but I changed my trainer in the winter – I'm working with Willy Linden [the guy who guided Stefan Everts] – and most of it is muscle now. My weight hasn't changed but I have lost the fat and gained muscle."

And that new training regime was put through its paces in Florida this winter under the watchful eye of CAS team manager Neil Prince. "We bought a bike over there to go out riding and we got the work done but it was a lot more than that. Mike Brown also came down to Orlando for a couple of weeks – he is a really nice guy, we could work together well. I think we were able to help each other. Mike has so much experience but I can also see things in his riding, particularly in sand.









With CAS team boss Harry Ainsworth





"The three of us talked about a lot of things, we had fun but we didn't get stressed and I didn't start riding in earnest until the end of January. Before that it was fun riding and I concentrated on physical training. Willy Linden was back in Belgium of course but we were in regular contact by phone and fax."

That raw speed – the one aspect of the sport which a motocrosser either has or hasn't got – was never more evident than during the weekend of the opening GP at Valkenswaard. More than half-a-second faster than the best of the rest in every session on Saturday, Ken also stormed to the front on race day but couldn't hold it and the wise heads were nodding again.

"I know people think I need to calm down my style – particularly after Valkenswaard – but I have worked really hard in the winter and I know I am stronger. When I go out practising midweek I can ride more than 45 minutes on full speed so I don't think that is a problem anymore. That first moto in Valkenswaard was the first time I've led a GP, I'm not used to it and that brings tension and costs energy.

"When I passed Josh I didn't try to ride away, I was looking at maintaining my speed for 40 minutes but I wasn't riding smooth. I think I knew I was going to get nervous and I wasn't finding the lines. In one way it is harder to ride in the back because you are looking for lines to pass but it is also hard to ride in the front. You have to find all of the lines yourself."

Winning is about so much more than being quick and Ken knows that too. "From the years before I know that on tracks close to home I always get stressed because I know there are so many supporters there who believe in me and I don't want to disappoint them.

"On Saturday everything went good all day and I was half-a-second faster than everybody else. Maybe I was just faster, maybe I had some better lines. And people say I have to play less. When I was on 125 I always liked to ride SX. I like to do jumps and things and even at the GPs I will have some fun and do some tricks but on race day it is serious."





Ken's Klub

Fan-tastic!

Life outside the big teams is not an easy one for a motocross rider and before Ken hooked up with CAS the big Belgian relied heavily on financial support from a group of hardcore fans at a local sports bar.

In a 2005 interview with Alex Hodgkinson, Ken gave DBR readers an insight into his unorthodox sponsorship package...

"My supporters club is the biggest help to my career. They cover almost all of my expenses – without them for sure I would not have reached the level I am now.

"My uncle started it in the local cafe where he goes drinking with friends and then they made a club – there are 160 people in it from around Leuven. They come to the race and can feel part of my success. Indeed, they are part of my success because without them it would not be possible. When we are racing in Belgium they go to the cafe and I join them there for a chat and to thank them."



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And that style – the 'energy-wasting' style? "People tell me my style is different and that I do things with a bike which nobody else can. But my size makes me different. Sometimes in the mud it is good to be so big but because of my size I do have to work harder on the bike. I am pretty strong and that lets me do those things naturally.

"We are still working to improve the suspension. They need harder springs for me because of my weight but at this level every rider needs something a little different anyway. We did some testing with Kayaba after Valkenswaard and we found that the suspension from last year is probably the best solution. The internals of the shock have been changed for '07 and we got lost a little bit."

Motocross in the barren sandy wastes of Flanders is a passion, a passion which supporters share with their heroes to a much deeper level than anything you can witness elsewhere in the world. So it's with a tinge of regret that Ken has only raced once in his homeland so far this season.

"The team and Willy decided that I should not have so many races at the start of the year – just the British races and one in Belgium – but from now on I don't have a weekend off until September. My fans understand that I have to race the British championship for the team and they come to the races which are not so far. And the British championship is better preparation for the GPs than the Belgian series where the races are only 20 minutes.

"I still see the fans when we meet in the street or something, sometimes we see other in the week and I go and eat at the sports bar every now and again."

And there has been a positive spin-off from racing over here. "I notice I have more and more fans in England too. That is nice. The motocross in England is really alive and well."

So what does motocross mean to a professional motocrosser? "I think motocross is a good job. Maybe you're not going to become a millionaire but what a good motocross rider earns today, a normal guy in Belgium would have to work for three or four years. It would be even better if they gave start money and prize money.

"I think motocross is a passion. It was my hobby and I have made a career out of it but it doesn't feel like that. That's the nice thing, getting paid to do what you enjoy doing. I still love racing or I don't think I would do it anymore."

And if he weren't a motocrosser? "Maybe I would do some other sport, I'm pretty good at basketball!" And if that didn't work out? "I would probably be working on the rooves. One of my uncles has a roofing business and two other uncles and my dad work for him." But Keeno is a motocrosser – and an extremely fast one too.

So what will we see this summer from #9? "I'm taking every race one at a time and as we get the suspension better and I get better in my head the results can only get better too. And after Valkenswaard I know even more than before that I have to do it by work and not by changing my style!"

You tell 'em Ken!





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Steve Cox is an American moto-journalist who follows the entire AMA SX/MX tour. Since moving on from US weekly Cycle News he's struck out on his own to do the freelance thing and last year launched a new bi-weekly MX magazine – Motocross Illustrated – covering both AMA and GP action. He knows the sport and its personalities like few others and as our US Editor provides insight straight from the Stateside scene…

GREEN SWEEP!

Kawasaki take four from four as the AMA and world SX championships draw to a close



James Stewart clinches the AMA SX title with a round still to run


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Tim Ferry ain't no whipping boy – unless he's, er, whipping it like this!

SERIES STANDINGS

Supercross

1	James Stewart	360 points
2	Chad Reed	312
3	Tim Ferry	261
4	Kevin Windham	220
5	David Vuillemin	182
6	Ivan Tedesco	179
7	Michael Byrne	178
8	Ricky Carmichael	160
9	Heath Voss	148
10	Paul Carpenter	135

With Monster Energy/Pro Circuit Kawasaki's Ryan Villopoto already having clinched the AMA Lites Western Regional SX crown at round seven of the series, this leaves the Eastern Regional Lites and the AMA SX titles (along with the World SX Championship) still to be decided.

Monster Energy Kawasaki's James Stewart has won in just about every way this year. He's won from behind, he's won out in battles and in Detroit he gets an opportunity to do it the easy way – to win from the front.

Stewart grabs the holeshot with his team-mate Timmy Ferry right on his tail followed by Andrew Short, Ivan Tedesco, Michael Byrne, Chad Reed and Kevin Windham. The way Stewart has been riding all year most expect that he will just run away but Ferry has other plans.

"It started off good with a holeshot and that was a key part," Stewart says. "I knew if I got a start and stayed up it was my race... The first couple laps I was making some mistakes and I had to calm down a little bit. I could see Timmy trying to hang with me back there so I'm sure he had to be a little nervous being up so close."

Ferry hangs within a couple of seconds of Stewart for nearly half of the race before he begins to drop back. By then Reed has worked his way into third with Windham hot on his heels.

"I didn't realize I was as far back as I actually was," Reed says of his early laps. "When I got into fifth or fourth I thought I was third and I wasn't. Me and Kevin were going at it and he showed me my passing line for the rest of the race. I passed pretty much everyone right there."

Windham trails Reed from outside the top five and Reed uses a line after a tricky triple onto a tabletop followed by a step-off over a jump to make all of his passes from there. He would just slide up to the inside in the turn and take the line away from his competitors.

Once he gets into third, though, he has a ways to go in order to catch Ferry. "When I got into third I knew Red Dog was a long way out there and he was going fast but I was happy to see him getting jacked by the lappers," Reed adds. "I made some time on him and put a pass on him and put some seconds on him."

Stewart has his moments with lappers as well but not enough to cost him the lead. "I had a couple of moments. It's tough because the guys try their best to get out of the way and they're battling for privateer money so I don't blame them. Once they saw it was me they moved out of the way so no hard feelings at all."

Once Reed grabs second the race is decided with Stewart taking a well-earned victory from the front.

In Seattle – the penultimate round of the series – Jeff Gibson grabs the holeshot but Stewart is quickly into the lead, even though he only needs ninth place or better to clinch the championship one round early. His chief rival Reed is kicking his bike over when the 30-second board goes sideways, gets it going just as the gate drops and still manages a top-three start! Unfortunately, Tedesco goes down in second and gathers Reed up with him, forcing the Aussie to the back of the pack before he has to stop and get his throttle fixed in the mechanics' area. The championship is basically over.

Stewart leads every lap and wins his 12th of the season over Millsaps and Windham while Ferry finishes fourth, Short fifth and Reed catches back up to sixth. So Stewart wins his first AMA SX crown and his second consecutive world SX title.

"The easiest thing for me was to ride the first few laps like I always do," Stewart says. "I was able to get a gap and it made it a little bit easier and all I had to do was focus on the race from there. The last five laps I rode like crap and I was just too tight but I'm just so stoked... Since I knew what a motorcycle was, watching all my favourite guys – Rick Johnson, Jeff Matiasevich, McGrath, Jeff Emig, Ricky – I always wanted to hold one of these things up [number-one plates] and to hold two of them up in one night is even more special."



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BT and team celebrate his Lites East title

BT CROWNED!

Kiwi ace takes title in the Motor City

Mathematically Ryan Morais, Ben Townley and Darcy Lange all have a shot at the Lites Eastern SX crown coming into the series finale in Detroit.

For Townley and Morais it's pretty simple – if Townley wins the race, he wins the championship but being three points back if he doesn't win the race then all Morais has to do is finish right behind him for the title. For Lange it's more complicated as he needs Dungey to finish fourth or worse and Morais to finish fifth or worse – and he needs to win the Main Event!

Ultimately, the math for Lange goes bad right away as he starts nearly dead last while Morais starts second to Ryan Dungey and Townley starts fourth behind Billy Laninovich.

Townley has his work cut out for him as in the early going it's clear that he will have to get around all three riders in front of him to secure the championship as finishing second to Dungey won't cut it if Morais stays close. However, only two laps in the drama seems over as Morais stalls his YZ250F in a turn and falls back to 10th. But Morais isn't done yet.

Showing the heart of a champion, Morais battles back, throwing down his fastest lap on lap 12 of 15. He catches up to fifth about the time that Townley passes Laninovich for second – a risky proposition in itself considering Townley was on the short end of the stick the last time the two occupied the same area of track at Orlando.

"It was a mellow race and I didn't want to make too many mistakes but I wanted to make sure I had enough to clinch that title," explains Ben. "I just tried to do what I needed to do. You can't win them all but I've got that championship and that's what's going to be remembered for me."

The Honda duo of Laninovich and Tommy Hahn begin to battle it out for the final podium spot. If the two tangle or cost each other too much time they will fall right into the grasp of Morais. Ultimately, though, Morais' valiant effort leaves him just short as he finishes right behind the Honda pair.

So Dungey takes the win followed by Townley, Hahn, Laninovich and Morais. It's Dungey's third win of the season in his rookie year. "It's a bummer that I didn't get the #1 plate but it's my first year," Dungey says. "I'm looking forward and I love what I do and I think it shows. I want to keep doing this for the rest of my career and make a good one out of it."

"This is what it's about," Townley grins. "This is a dream come true since '98 when I came to a race in America. I can't say enough for my family and everyone in my crew. I've got to say a shoutout to everyone in New Zealand – grandparents, friends, watching in. So many people all over the world that are rooting for me, I've got to say a big thanks for all their support. This is what it's all about."

The series then heads to Seattle where the Lites Western Regional riders hit the track one last time before the season finale East/West Shootout in Las Vegas a week later. The race has no championship significance although it is in the home state of both champion Ryan Villopoto and Yamaha's Josh Hill.

Villopoto's team-mate Chris Gosselaar grabs the holeshot followed by Hill, Josh Grant, Villopoto and Jason Lawrence. Hill quickly moves into the lead where he stays for the next five laps as Villopoto works his way toward him. When the two hometown boys begin to go at it the crowd goes nuts but Villopoto gets the upper hand and begins to pull away from Hill as Hill falls into the clutches of Grant and Lawrence.

They both dispatch him before Grant crashes out of second place. The race ends with Villopoto grabbing his seventh win in eight races followed by Lawrence and Hill.

"I won just about every one and got second at the one in Phoenix so it's been a great season for me and I can't thank the guys enough," Villopoto says. "Next weekend we get to race the East Coast guys for the first time and get to see what they bring to the table so it's going to be fun to go over there. Vegas is a pretty tough track and I think they're going to have their work cut out."

FINAL SERIES STANDINGS

Lites East

1	Ben Townley	133
2	Ryan Morais	130
3	Darcy Lange	117
4	Branden Jesseman	103
5	Ryan Dungey	98
6	Billy Laninovich	85
7	Tommy Hahn	84
8	Mike Alessi	84
9	Matt Goerke	83
10	Justin Brayton	68

Lites West

1	Ryan Villopoto	197
2	Jason Lawrence	157
3	Josh Hill	128
4	Jake Weimer	120
5	Chris Gosselaar	111
6	Josh Hansen	98
7	Josh Grant	91
8	Matt Lemoine	85
9	Troy Adams	84
10	Kyle Cunningham	77

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BELLISSIMO!

Only in Italy could a passion for motocross lead to the creation of the world's most exclusive 450cc MXGP bike

Words and photos by Jonty Edmunds



WHEN IT comes to motorsport few nations come close to being as passionate as the Italians. Steeped in motor racing history, Italy's affection for two and four-wheeled action is as strong as the country's obsession for pasta, bespoke tailoring and espresso coffee. Everywhere you look in Italy it's clear that the country has a love affair with engines, racing and all that goes with it.

It's because of this passion for motorsport that Italy has enjoyed more than its fair share of racing successes, produces some of the world's most desired sports cars and bikes and is home to many of the most competitive national motorsport championships in the world.

Now, thanks to two Italian businessmen and their passion for motocross, Italy also produces the world's most exclusive MX1 GP bike – the WRM Quattroecinquanta, or WRM 450 to those who don't speak Italian.

"WRM is a small company situated in the north of Italy," explains WR Compositi's Alex Balestra. "WR Compositi has been making carbon fibre products for bicycles and important Italian companies including Ferrari, Maserati and Lambourgini since 1990.

"The two company owners are extremely passionate about motocross and decided three years ago to build a bike and started WRM. In '06 the bike raced in the Italian Supermoto Championship, secured some impressive results and finished fifth in the series with Walter Bartolini, the older brother of '99 500cc



Momma mia! This is one spicy Italian meatball

world champion Andrea."

The bringing together of a wealth of experience in the manufacturing of composite materials with a passion for motocross has resulted in WRM designing and building a bike radically different to any other in the MX1 world championship today. Thanks to plentiful use of carbon fibre and carbon kevlar, the WRM 450 is as visually different to the European and Japanese machines against which it now competes as it is beautiful.

But the WRM 450 was never intended simply as a thing of beauty. Designed to be competitive at the highest level, the company opted to manufacture their own engine rather than use motors from existing suppliers. Wanting to produce a bike that is as competitive at the highest level as it is visually striking and technically different, WRM also wanted to try and keep the bike as Italian as possible with only a minimum of non-Italian products used in its construction.

Pretty much everything you could wish for on a factory bike the WRM has as standard. But unlike all other 450cc motocross bikes, buyers seriously interested in a WRM get to try the bike before they buy it. After spending a day with engine designer Iller Aldini, the exact specification and settings a buyer requires from the engine and suspension are finalised before the finished bike is built to ensure you get exactly what you want for your 22,000 Euros. So far 'some' WRM 450s have been sold.

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The bike's chassis is simply a work of art. Using three materials – aluminium, steel and carbon fibre – the frame consists of plates of 7072 aluminium which are used in conjunction with a perimeter section manufactured from carbon fibre and a headstock constructed from steel that offers a variable steering head angle of +/- 2.5 degrees.

Every inch of the chassis is flawless with the swingarm constructed solely – with the exception of aluminium inserts for the rear wheel spindle and suspension pivots – from carbon fibre.

The body work too is all made from carbon fibre with the eight litre fuel tank covered in two layers of a silver metallic 'skin' which is incorporated into the carbon fibre to make the bike look just that extra bit special. As a bike designed for use on the race track and not simply as a shop window for WR Compositi's craftsmen, the bike's price includes a set of plastic side panels and radiator shrouds which are required by the FIM for international competition.

The subframe, like on many other bikes competing on the MXGP scene, is constructed exclusively from carbon fibre. A one-piece design that is not only much lighter than a standard plastic and aluminium unit, the WRM's airbox is also incredibly well sealed helping the Twin Air filter inside it breathe easily no matter what the track conditions.

The suspension fitted to the bike is Italy's finest with 49mm USD Solva forks taking care of the damping at the front of the bike while a Solva shock with 310mm of travel soaks up the bumps at the rear. Or if you prefer an Ohlins shock can be fitted with WRM then knocking 800 Euros off the price of the bike. As a machine designed for the international race track the wheel spindles are made from steel, according to FIM regulations, with the forks held in place by a set of beautifully machined billet aluminium triple clamps.

In wanting to keep the bike as Italian as possible the only Japanese parts used are Nissin master cylinders and a Keihin carburettor. With brake discs and brake calipers supplied by Braking, RaceTech supplying the plastics, Regina the chain, WRP the handlebars, PBR the sprockets, STM the slipper clutch, Scarow the exhaust and Pirelli the tyres the list of 'home made' parts is extensive. Finished with billet 7075 T6 aluminium hubs and a mass of titanium fasters, attention to detail along every inch of the WRM is incredible. The bike weighs in at 104kg.

The engine fitted into the Quattroecinquanta is the company's own, designed and assembled by Aldini Racing's Iller Aldini – a motorcycle technician widely regarded as one of the best in Italy and the man who worked as mechanic for current Yamaha MXGP boss Michele Rinaldi when the Italian won the '84 125cc world MX title. With a sand casting process used to manufacture many of the engine parts in the Emilia Romagna region of Italy, the engine components are then delivered to WRM's base in Bergamo where the motors are assembled and matched to their chassis.

The SOHC, four-valve, five-speed engine has been designed with top level riders in mind with an incredibly strong power output that is 'almost too strong for most normal riders'. With only a handful of Italians other than the team's official rider Christian Beggi having ridden the bike, those that have claim it feels very much like a Honda to ride with a narrow chassis, a flat seat and an open cockpit. With its suspension set-up a little on the stiff side the bike feels shorter than other 450s but it's stable at speed and turns well. Put simply the WRM requires a rider that can push a 450 towards its limits to get the best from it.

With the bike always designed to be used in competition the decision was taken to enter the '07 MX1 world championship in October of last year which meant a busy winter for the entire WRM team. "With race bikes to build and a team to organise last winter was an extremely busy time for us," adds Balestra. And it was hard work that began to pay off at the second round of the series in Spain when WRM scored their first world championship point when Beggi finished 20th in moto two.

"The project was started simply because of passion. WR Compositi's core business is the manufacturing of carbon fibre parts, not the production of motocross bikes. It is a bike built through passion," insists Balestra. "With no big outside sponsors and only a small racing budget the company is extremely pleased with what it has achieved. With the level of MX GP racing extremely high, for a company like WRM to score a world championship point is a fantastic achievement. Competing in MX1 is certainly a challenge and with the development of the bike on-going the team hope to be more competitive in the second half of the season.

"WRM the company believes it has achieved what it set out to do which is to build the most exclusive 450 motocross bike on the planet - one that is different from all other bikes and extremely effective on the track.

"At the moment we have no regular production so you can't walk into WRM and expect to buy a Quattroecinquanta there and then. But the company plans to begin a regular production of the bikes in late summer ready for the start of '08. This is the goal of WRM."



CORDON BLEU!

Let's forget the four-strokes because it's the SY-250 two-smoker that's the best-selling Scorpa trials weapon so that's what we let Clarky loose on in Cumbria, eh!

Words by Dan Clark Photos by Fergus O'Dreyfus

THE FRENCH are an inventive breed and over the years they've created many classics such as French bread, French fries, the French tickler, French kissing, French knickers, French toast, the French Connection, French dressing and erm Dawn French. As well creating their own piece de resistances they ain't bad at re-hashing old favourites either...

For many years Yamaha dominated global trials bike sales with their TY range but in 1993 they screwed it all up with the TYZ250. Big, wide, heavy and over-the-top, the TYZ was a monumental disaster and Yamaha's trials bike sales declined to the point where the number-crunchers at the Japanese factory lost interest and the bike was dropped from the range like the flaming turd it so blatantly was.











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Specifications
Scorpa SY-250

Capacity: *249cc*
Bore and stroke: *74mm x 58mm*
Transmission: *Six-speed*
Carburettor: *TK26mm*
Front suspension: *Paioli 38mm fork*
Rear suspension: *Sachs shock*
Front brake: *Floating 182mm disc*
Rear brake: *150mm disc*
Wheelbase: *1325mm*
Seat height: *610mm*
Dry weight: *72kg*



But while the TYZ was considered to ride like an unruly tank it did have something of an inner beauty. The engine at the centre of the monstrous creation was actually a very dependable performer and when fresh-faced French manufacturer Scorpa looked for something more competitive to replace the outdated Rotax motors they had been running previously, they turned to the land of the rising sun and Yamaha in particular.

With the Yamaha TYZ engine bolted into the Scorpa chassis many trials experts felt that the 1998 SY-250 was the bike Yamaha should have produced instead of the TYZ. Hindsight – like Vanessa Paradis – is of course a beautiful thing and Yamaha's loss can only be considered Scorpa's gain.

It's 10 years since the SY-250 was launched and although not that much has changed all-new rear suspension, a decent flat sump guard and stunning looks now grace the SY making it even more desirable to the masses. The build quality is another thing that takes these bikes to the top of the 'most wanted' list as the machined triple clamps and footpegs are quite frankly fricking fantastic.

Having helped develop the Scorpas between 2000 and 2005 through the then UK importers I was quite looking forward to seeing what progress the French factory had made in the past two years. On first impressions the bike looks more amazing than ever with its sleek black wheels and anodised front forks, sparkly grey frame and beautiful electric blue plastics. But the big question is has the bike actually improved or is it all just bling?

I always find Scorpa bikes to be good and reliable. The engine is more or less the same as it's ever been and you can lay down the power and find grip no matter what the conditions – it's even good on muddy and slippery stuff. You can find more grip with this bike than any other on the market as the power on most bikes is too snappy. Saying that the motor has more than enough power to get you up and over the biggest rock steps.

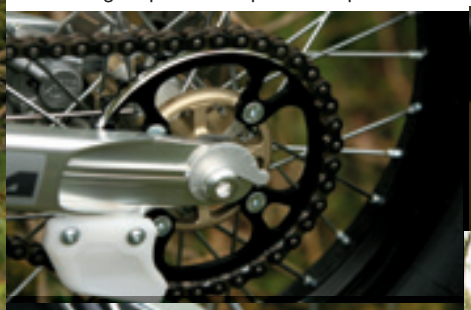
The bottom-end power feels very sweet and soft. In fact the mid-range is good too and my only gripe would be with the top-end which only a handful of riders in this country would use anyway. It seems to rev but then peak a little too early – almost like there's a rev limiter – but for almost everyone but the very best experts the engine is perfect.

In my opinion the Scorpa has the best suspension on the market with the Paioli forks and Sachs shock working perfectly together on all kinds of terrain. The rear suspension uses the no-linkage system – like Beta – which is great for maintenance.

Speaking of which looking after the carburettor can be a bit of a pain on the Scorpa as you have to remove the airbox to get to it. That shouldn't be a problem if you keep on top of air filter preparation but it's still not ideal.

The brakes and clutch operation both work perfectly which is all you'd expect on a 2007 model bike really.

All in all I reckon the bike rides fantastic – and after watching Lawless attack those banks on it I'm sure he'd agree – and would suit pretty much all trials riders from beginners through to experts.











For more shots of our Scorpa test check out the gallery at www.dirtbikerider.com

DREAM GREEN!

It's taken him a wee while but Sutty's finally broken in his new KXF and it's all good so far – apart from those pesky stock grips...

Words by Antoine Cartman Photos by still-mx.co.uk

SOMEONE SMARTER than me once claimed that 'sometimes the best-laid plans have to be put to rest'. And although my plans are always something less than best-laid, at times I still have to put them to rest regardless. So instead of finding a race to erm, race in, like I claimed I might last month I headed off to Cusses Gorse for a Racers Edge MX track day for my maiden ride out with the KXF450 instead.

Racers Edge MX – **racersedgemx.co.uk** – is the Paul Cowshall owned and operated training school that's based in the Salisbury area but runs at tracks around the country. Paul's an ex-British championship runner and multi-time South West centre champion but more than that he's a great people-person and coach who uses his laid-back attitude to bring out the best in people.

The track day itself was for 40 or so of Paul's closest friends and favourite customers as well as a couple of press blaggers and hangers on. With the event being held at the perfectly prepared Cusses Gorse circuit – **cussesgorsemx.co.uk** – and with the sun shining everyone who made it knew they were in for a good day. A big thank you goes out to Paul and the Racers Edge mob, Justin and the Barclay family and everyone from the **mxtrax.co.uk** and racersedgemx forums who made it to Cusses for a great day's riding.

Before I got there I was a little nervous about riding the 450 after a long winter spent resting and recovering from a string of niggling injuries. Apparently sitting on the couch and eating crap does your figure or fitness levels no good at all as I found that none of my riding kit – bar my musty and trusty 2006 Troy Lee GP stuff – would stretch around my ferociously fattening frame any more. Bah!

Luckily the KXF's power is plentiful and its suspension beefy so after a few laps I felt right at home riding again even if my tongue was dragging in my spokes and I was breathing outta my arse in record time. And as soon as I'd remembered how to ride again I started thinking more about how the Kawasaki performs.

My initial feeling was that the gearing is too low and I found myself mostly using just the top three gears – that's third through fifth. The motor has loads of torque and will pull third from almost nothing which is great for the hardpack conditions of Cusses which accentuates the need to ride smoothly. I found that by using the motor's ability to pull tall gears you can get the power to the ground very efficiently and save lots of energy which is great for when you haven't got much to start with.

I'm unsure about the suspension's performance as it's still brand-new and needs bedding in further. So far it does actually feel pretty good and although I'm using most of the stroke it isn't bottoming out or giving a feeling of harshness. The KXF generally feels like a well-balanced bike and I'm excited about taking it racing some time soon.



Full of the joys of spring! Sutty skips through the Cusses Gorse whoops

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After a long winter on the sofa Sutty's in great shape to test the boingers

As a personal preference I'm planning on fitting some slightly taller handlebars – there's nowt wrong with the stock Renthals but in recent times I've found Kevin Windham Twinwalls to be the best for my height and style of riding. Generally speaking the Kawasaki's ergonomics are good – everything is right where you want it and it all functions well.

One thing I'm personally struggling with is the length of the kickstart lever as the lack of movement in my right knee – due to arthritis – makes it hard to give it a good kick unless I'm stood with my left foot on the peg. It makes me wonder if shorter riders also have the same problem so if any diddy four-fiddy owners out there do have a problem starting their bikes please email me and let me know, especially if you've found a fix.

The only other things I don't like so much are the seat-cover – the material has stretched and is rucked up after two hours of riding – and the grips. The stock grips suck and should come with a quibble free guarantee that states they'll rip your hands to pieces or you get your money back. After wisely using Renthal dual compound Kevlar grips all last year – and not suffering any hand discomfort or signs of blisters whatsoever – I was a little peeved to have bleeding hands after less than 30 minutes spent behind the bars.

Aside from that small problem and one that's a very cheap fix at that I can't say there's owt wrong with the KXF. It can be a bit of a pig to start at times but I'm convinced that's down to my impatience and poor technique rather than a flaw with the mosickle.

That said now the beast is fully run in I'll be checking the valve clearances closely as poor starting is all too often a sign that the inlets are hard on. I'll break out the manual and run through that before my next ride and also give you an idiot's guide of how it's done in next month's update unless I can convince Wakker to break out his feeler gauges instead – Rich Tea, Godfrey?

DBR Tested

Electric EG-1 MX goggle

With a plethora of new motocross goggles pouring on to the market there has never been a better time to pick something a little bit different to protect your peepers with. Of course different doesn't always mean better and while we haven't tested every goggle on the market – yet! – we have tried these new EG-1s from Electric.

Electric are an American eyewear company who are probably better known in snow circles than dirt but judging by the fit and feel of the two pairs we've tried so far they certainly know what they're doing when it comes to producing quality goggles.

The dual-layer foam helps seal the goggles to your face while wicking the sweat away and sealing it inside. Ventilation is quite good too and no fogging was experienced, this is usually a problem on test shoots where a rider continuously rides one tight corner until he's dizzy and never gets up to enough speed to de-fog the lens.

At 75 quid they ain't the cheapest goggles on the market and personally I wouldn't say they're the best either but they are damn fine and they do get people asking what they are. So, if you're a massive poseur or an attention-seeking whore like myself you'll wanna log on to ***electricvisual.com*** *to check the full range before calling* ***01656 782220*** *to find your nearest stockist.*

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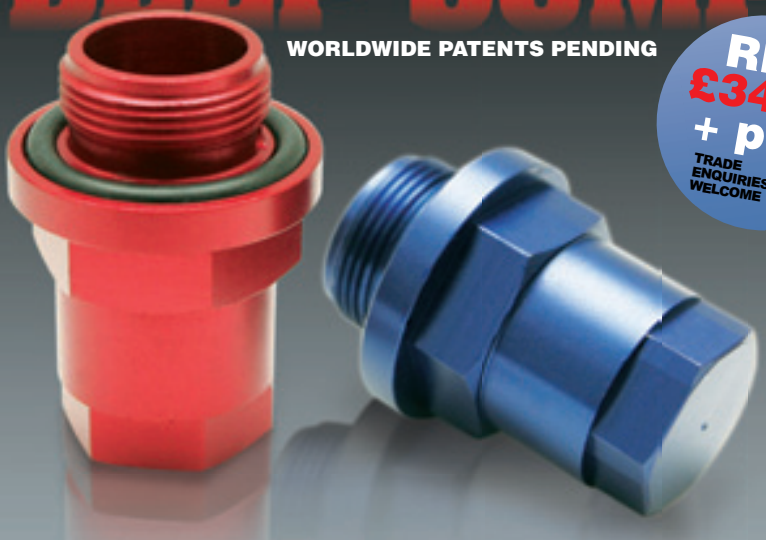
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RACE PACE!

Spring is here, the nights are getting lighter and with the extra daylight hours comes an extra motivation to train...

Words by Alan Milway

GONE ARE the long dark nights and spring has very much sprung. With it comes more time on the bike and for some the chance to race most weekends. It is often the case that when the racing season comes around it highlights and puts into sharp focus your personal areas of strength and weakness.

One of the more common comments I hear from amateur riders is the fact that they can start the race well – even push themselves for the first part – but then they slowly drift back into the obscurity of mid-pack. What I want to highlight is that by improving your own potential you'll go a long way to improving your results and your enjoyment of riding and racing.

Fitness training is something enjoyed by a lot more people when the weather is good and I can't blame them. So hopefully this time of year is motivating and will lead to more of a drive to spend a couple of evenings per week training for the weekend.

Motocross racing, enduros and hare and hounds all require a high level of skill and technique but also fitness to complete an event. In my opinion hare and hounds events are some of the most physically challenging sporting events you can do – you may not be pedaling up a hill or running 26 miles trying to keep ahead of a man dressed as a post box but your effort levels are through the roof for three hours.

The most appropriate form of mid-week off-the-bike training is to do something that in some way replicates the exertion and physical challenge of riding a motorbike. If you want to prepare in the best way possible then having a continual, gradual improvement in your ability to maintain high intensity exercise for prolonged periods will go a long way to make a weekend's riding or racing a whole lot easier.

In a race situation your oxygen supply is immediately challenged. The muscles demand oxygen to be able to continue functioning efficiently and to do so without fatiguing quickly. In a best case scenario you won't even find the riding physically challenging – you will be more worried about who is ahead of you (or over your shoulder) and this is the way it should be. However, to get to this stage you need to have a very efficient, high performance energy supply system for the muscles.

A very good way of improving your endurance capacity (the ability to go harder for longer) is to train at a level which is right on the border between steady exercise and hard exercise. If you imagine going for a steady run, there is a pace at which you can run and run and run. It is not a slow jog but an enjoyable steady pace that you could do for ages. If you are doing this and then you try to up the pace to race someone you can go a lot faster – but in a very short space of time you are tiring and need to slow down or your legs will give in.

These two speeds highlight aerobic and anaerobic energy levels. What is interesting is that neither one of these are directly related to a motocross event! It takes a lot of skill to be able to fully attack the track and ride the bike to its limit and your physical limit and the 'jog' pace would only be used if you were pottering round a track – not likely in a race situation! We want to find the level between 'steady' and 'flat out' which is where fatigue in the muscles is just being held off. Any higher and lactic acid will quickly accumulate and any slower and it will be too easy.

This level is known as the lactic threshold. If you can train at this level and maintain exercise at a level that is hard but continued you will increase the duration at which you can push yourself and therefore when you get onto the bike your body is ready to deal with the rigours of riding and will allow you to push yourself without hitting your physical limit. It will also let you improve your skill level as often the reason for mistakes is fatigue ruining your technique!

It should be noted that for hare and hounds riders this training technique will make the biggest difference to riding and results. As I mentioned previously, this style of event is very physically challenging and if you can't maintain a hard pace you revert to a slow, steady pace that you can maintain for the duration. This means slowing down and is often the reason for the field opening up.

Try this as an example of a training session to get the best from your week – ideally outdoors and either running or, even better, cycling.

* ***Have a good warm up – 10-15 minutes steady exercise allowing cheeks to go red, sweat on the brow and breathing to get heavier.***

* ***Build up the pace gradually until you are at about 85-90 per cent of your maximum effort. If you are with a training partner you should not be able to chat and it should feel hard work!***

* ***Sustain this effort for about five minutes. You should 'just' be able to complete the full five minutes so either set yourself a time countdown or even better pick a location that will take approximately five minutes to reach.***

* ***At the end of the exertion relax but keep moving – a slow walk or a very easy gear on the bike. The continued exercise allows built-up lactic acid to be burnt off and will stop your legs from feeling very heavy after the first effort.***

* ***Have four to six minutes recovery at a slow, steady effort.***

* ***Pick another destination or set the clock and go again! Just as hard but the full duration should be completed without blowing a valve.***

• ***Repeat this four to six times but remember that if you are struggling to complete the five minutes call it a day as you can get over-fatigued.***



- ***To finish the session have a slow recovery jog/ride home and stretch off – this will speed recovery. Also remember lots of carbohydrate and water. Then put your feet up in the knowledge you'll be better prepared for the weekend!***

This type of training is hard but very rewarding. Listening to music helps focus and push you and having a training partner of similar ability is also very worthwhile as you can push and encourage each other. This kind of training is not advised just before a weekend or to be done more than two times a week as you need some time to recover from it. Add a swim or weights training session into your week and you'll have a great plan to set you up for the summer and the races. Obviously, if you are feeling light-headed or weak back the pace down or stop!

Good luck and see you at the races...



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MAGIC NUMBER!

Altogether now – three's a jolly good fellow, three's a jolly good fellow, three's a jolly good fe-eh-lowwww...

Words and photo by Sutty

GRAMMY-AWARD winning hip hop group De La Soul reckon that three's the magic number and after the third round of the Maxxis British motocross championship held at Lyng it's possibly safe to say that Brad Anderson, his sweary team boss Roy Emberson and, indeed, the entire Pioneer Yamaha squad would agree.

Not only does bad Brad take his maiden Maxxis moto win but the Easter Sunday race is eggstra (see what I did there?) special for the wily north-easterner as he also stakes his claim on the MX1 overall with a 1-2 scorecard. But the final results don't quite tell the full story...

It's actually defending champ Ken De Dycker who crosses the line first in moto one on his CAS Honda but after a 'random' noise test on the champ's bike (it's blatantly obvious that Keeno's silencer is damaged mid-moto and will definitely fail to meet the 96dB limit if tested) he's given a one-minute penalty which means everyone in the top six is bumped up one spot – thank you very much!

And things get worse for the frighteningly fast Belgian star in race two. A non-functioning rear brake – damaged by a razor-sharp rock – causes Ken to pull out prematurely and surrender his red championship leader's plate to Motorex/Twisted-7 Kawasaki's Billy MacKenzie – that's one hell of a birthday present, eh Billy?

Despite coming away in control of the points race the birthday boy has a very mixed day in Lyng. A dose of the dreaded arm-pump first time out sees the now 23-year-old Scot slip from a safe lead to finally finish fourth behind Keeno, Ando and James Noble-o before being elevated back to third thanks to Ken's dB misdemeanor. Race two's a very different story though as Billy dominates from gate to flag leaving Anderson to beat off PAR Homes Honda's Gordon Crockard and claim his maiden overall round win ahead of MacKenzie and Multitek Honda's Noble.

After suffering a devastating DNF at round two in Landrake and relinquishing the MX2 series lead to Wulfsport Kawasaki's Shaun Simpson, Gareth Swanepoel is the man on a points scoring mission at Lyng. The South African Molson teamster takes a pair of come-from-behind wins to beat the equally consistent Tommy Searle who takes over the series lead on his factory KTM.

If consistency is Tommy's friend and ally then the c-word can only be Simpson's sworn enemy as the wee Wulfsport-clad nipper has a nightmare day and can only muster a 7-8 scorecard which means he slips from first to fourth in the championship battle. Retaining third overall in the championship – behind Searle and Swanny – is CAS Honda's Mike Brown who also finishes third on the day with a 4-3.

Series standings

MX1

1	Billy MacKenzie (Motorex Kawasaki)	159 points
2	Gordon Crockard (PAR Homes Honda)	153
3	Ken De Dycker (CAS Honda)	134
4	James Noble (Multitek Honda)	134
5	Brad Anderson (Pioneer Yamaha)	126
6	Mark Eastwood (Wiseco Honda)	88
7	Mark Hucklebridge (MotoXtreme Kawasaki)	73
8	Jordan Rose (Albion KTM)	71
9	Danny Smyth (Wiseco Honda)	68
10	Glen Phillips (ARW Yamaha)	59

MX2

1	Tommy Searle (Red Bull KTM)	148 points
2	Gareth Swanepoel (Molson Kawasaki)	139
3	Mike Brown (CAS Honda)	136
4	Shaun Simpson (Wulfsport Kawasaki)	133
5	Tom Church (Molson Kawasaki)	120
6	Sean Hamblin (Swift Suzuki)	109
7	Martin Barr (Bike It/Dixon Yamaha)	100
8	Lewis Gregory (Relentless Suzuki)	87
9	Jason Dougan (Fork Rent Suzuki)	87
10	Ray Rowson (Molson Kawasaki)	63

For more British championship shots check out the gallery at www.dirtbikerider.co.uk



He can't live with Swanepoel's pace at Lyng but Tommy Searle keeps a cool head to take the MX2 series leader's red plate


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CLOSE CALL!

Josh stays upright and on top in MXl while Tony tears to a 44-point lead in MX2

Words and photo by Alex Hodgkinson

"I NEARLY lost it there, you got a picture?" Sure did, Josh! Yup, the Kiwi King of the GP scene doesn't mean to do this but he saves it and goes on to take a double win in Spain and finish equal top scorer in Portugal to carry a 19-point lead over to next month.

Kevin Strijbos, the man who finally stops Coppins' victory roll at Agueda, is already his only serious threat in the points but Billy Mac and James Noble are both on the pace, the Scot showing the speed to run top three each week and the Yorkshireman now on an action-packed pace that could have given him a podium in Portugal had an errant Frenchie not wiped him out.

But the thrill-a-minute tussles are again in MX2. Tony Cairoli catches Chris Pourcel at two seconds a lap to win in Spain and the Sicilian runs down the champion again in Portugal with the rest of the world missing two-and-a-half seconds a lap!

After a second moto crash at Agueda Pourcel already trails by 44 and the roles are reversed from last year. After five wins and a second it's all going to plan for Tony. "I just wanted to start the season with consistent results."

Third highest scorer of the month is Tommy Searle and The Gun rattles up his first podium in orange in Portugal. Swanny, TC, Nunny and Shaun Simpson are also top 20 on points.

Series standings

MX1

1	*Josh Coppins (Yamaha Rinaldi)*	*144 points*
2	*Kevin Strijbos (Suzuki Geboers)*	*125*
3	*Jonathan Barragan (Red Bull KTM)*	*89*
4	*Steve Ramon (Suzuki Geboers)*	*86*
5	*Ken De Dycker (CAS Honda)*	*84*
6	*Sebastien Pourcel (GPKR Kawasaki)*	*67*
7	*Max Nagl (Sarholz KTM)*	*63*
8	*David Philippaerts (Red Bull KTM)*	*62*
9	*Mike Brown (CAS Honda)*	*62*
10	*Manuel Priem (Factory TM)*	*61*
12	*James Noble (Multitek Honda)*	*61*
15	*Billy MacKenzie (Motorex Kawasaki)*	*46*
23	*Gordon Crockard (PAR Homes Honda)*	*10*

MX2

1	*Antonio Cairoli (De Carli Yamaha)*	*147 points*
2	*Christophe Pourcel (GPKR Kawasaki)*	*103*
3	*Tyla Rattray (Red Bull KTM)*	*98*
4	*Pascal Leuret (NGS Honda)*	*87*
5	*Tommy Searle (Red Bull KTM)*	*79*
6	*Kenneth Gundersen (Ricci Yamaha)*	*75*
7	*Gareth Swanepoel (Molson Kawasaki)*	*72*
8	*Nicolas Aubin (Ricci Yamaha)*	*69*
9	*Matti Seistola (SRS Honda)*	*61*
10	*Anthony Boissiere (CLS Kawasaki)*	*57*
17	*Tom Church (Molson Kawasaki)*	*33*
18	*Carl Nunn (Bike It Dixon Yamaha)*	*27*
19	*Shaun Simpson (Wulfsport Kawasaki)*	*23*
23	*Sean Hamblin (Swift Suzuki)*	*10*
25	*Jason Dougan (Fork Rent Suzuki)*	*8*
28	*Martin Barr (Bike It Dixon Yamaha)*	*5*



Golly gosh, Josh! Coppins hangs on to the Rinaldi Yamaha – and his MX1 points lead



WHITE WASH!

Toni Bou maintains his unbeaten run as the WTC stops off in Guatemala

Words by g2f.co.uk Photo by Juan Carlos Munoz

REPSOL MONTESA HRC's star turn Toni Bou continues his world trials domination by winning both days of the GP held in Guatemala as the championship makes its first ever trip to South America since the series begun back in 1975. Despite the riders having to be escorted to and from the circuit in minibuses with armed guards front and rear, the trial itself – that takes place at a go kart track (that sits in the middle of three volcanoes, one of which remains active!) – is declared a success by all concerned.

Takahisa Fujinami and Adam Raga join Bou on the podium in that order on day one and then swap places as they once again follow him home on Sunday. Britain's Dougie Lampkin is rewarded with two fourth spots for his long trip south and while he's slightly off the pace on Saturday he is cruelly robbed of a rostrum finish 24 hours later as he loses out on a most cleans tie-break.

Alexz Wigg claims a great first day victory in the Junior class despite being restricted to 125cc due to his age and moves into second place in the standings behind fellow Brit Michael Brown who goes 3-1 on a borrowed Beta as his own bike fails to arrive in Guatemala. A pair of runners up trophies for Ross Danby in the Youth category puts him in second spot in the 125 series after two rounds.

Series standings

WTC

1	*Toni Bou (Montesa)*	*60 points*
2	*Adam Raga (Gas Gas)*	*49*
3	*Takahisa Fujinami (Montesa)*	*45*
4	*Dougie Lampkin (Montesa)*	*41*
5	*Albert Cabestany (Sherco)*	*31*
7	*James Dabill (Montesa)*	*28*
11	*Shaun Morris (Gas Gas)*	*13*

Junior

1	*Michael Brown (Beta)*	*55 points*
2	*Alexz Wigg (Gas Gas)*	*50*
3	*Nicolas Gontard (Gas Gas)*	*47*
4	*Loris Gubian (Sherco)*	*41*
5	*Lee Sampson (Sherco)*	*32*
9	*Sam Haslam (Scorpa)*	*13*

Youth

1	*Alfredo Gomez (Gas Gas)*	*60 points*
2	*Ross Danby (Gas Gas)*	*49*
3	*Alexis Cervantes (Sherco)*	*43*
4	*Patrick Smage (Sherco)*	*30*
5	*David Millan (Sherco)*	*30*



Toni Bou's incredible run of form continues as he cards 1-1 down Guatemala way


SHEA
REPSOL

USUAL SUSPECTS!

BMW join the WEC series in Spain but the championship's big hitters continue to dominate

Words and photo by Jonty Edmunds

WITH FROZEN terrain replaced by a burning sun the WEC arrives in Spain at the end of April where the series' first Southern European event sees a torrential thunderstorm ensure a much wetter than expected opening day's competition.

Maintaining his 100 per cent win record so far this season, KTM's Juha Salminen takes two more E1 class wins to open up a commanding early championship advantage. With day one 'not that difficult' according to the Finn, on day two the factory KTM rider increases his pace to prove once again that he's the rider to beat in E1.

At the top of the E2 class Yamaha's Johnny Aubert wins both days to move to third in the championship standings. With the event's extreme and motocross tests in reality both motocross tests the former GP MXer wins comfortably on day one before managing to remain in front on day two despite two falls.

Although suffering with flu, Finn Mika Ahola comes away from the event leading the E2 championship after placing in second on day one and third on day two. And – thanks to the efforts of Stefan Merriman – Aprilia claim their first ever WEC podium finish with third on day one.

Encouraged by his home crowd Ivan Cervantes proves as hard to beat in the E3 class as Salminen in E1 and claims two day wins. Finishing ahead of team-mate Marko Tarkkala on both days, Husaberg's Bjorne Carlsson rounds out the podium twice but is unable to get close the KTM duo ahead of him.

In the Enduro Junior class Gas Gas rider Christophe Nambotin claims a double win while two impressive rides see Brit Tom Sagar move to fourth in the championship.

Series standings

E1

1	*Juha Salminen (KTM)*	*100 points*
2	*Alessandro Belometti (KTM)*	*72*
3	*Bartosz Oblucki (Husqvarna)*	*69*
28	*Tim Lewis (TM)*	*3*

E2

1	*Mika Ahola (Honda)*	*89 points*
2	*Samuli Aro (KTM)*	*85*
3	*Johnny Aubert (Yamaha)*	*82*

E3

1	*Marko Tarkkala (KTM)*	*94 points*
2	*Ivan Cervantes (KTM)*	*90*
3	*Bjorne Carlsson (Husaberg)*	*79*
15	*Euan McConnell (TM)*	*21*
17	*Gordon Clarke (TM)*	*18*

EJ

1	*Joakim Ljunggren (Husaberg)*	*90 points*
2	*Christophe Nambotin (Gas Gas)*	*63*
3	*Thomas Oldrati (KTM)*	*57*
4	*Tom Sagar (KTM)*	*54*
6	*Jake Stapleton (TM)*	*47*
18	*Si Wakely (Husqvarna)*	*18*
20	*Daryl Bolter (Husqvarna)*	*17*



Five-time world MX champ Joel Smets makes his WEC debut on the new BMW


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SPEEDY SAM!

IN THE BIG-WHEEL 85cc DIVISION IT SEEMS THERE'S JUST ONE MAN TO BEAT AT THE BYMX THIS YEAR AND IT'S ALBION HONDA'S SAM DAVIS...

Words and photos by still-mx.co.uk

Sam Davis is a 14-year-old Wiltshire lad who's had a pretty good start to his year and currently leads the BYMX series in the BW85 class. Sam's so successful he struggles to get the door closed on his trophy cabinet and there are a hinge-busting number of awards packed away in there after just nine years of riding.

Sam hopes to make 2007 his most successful season so far after already laying claim to the '03 65cc supercross, '03 Champion of Champions and '05 BYMX small wheel titles. After tackling the labyrinth of vans, campers and race homes I finally stumbled across Sam as he was getting prepared for Sunday morning practice at the Culham BYMX national. Here's what he had to say for himself.

Rage: You couldn't get much of a better start to the season than you have managed...
SD: "Yeah, three wins and a fourth at Desertmartin was good. I was happy with it as you can imagine, all I need to do now is keep the momentum going and keep extending my points gap from the next rider."

Rage: And riding a track as sweet as Desertmartin must make the long journey worth while?
SD: "It was definitely worth the trip this time around. I haven't had such good luck at Desertmartin before but this year it was good and things went my way. I'm always excited when I go there – the track is prepped really well and it is always run well. It's a great event."

Rage: What have you been doing over the winter months to get so ready for racing in 2007?
SD: "I don't want to let too many secrets out (laughs) but I have been working hard and have been putting in the motos."

Rage: When you first got a bike who was it that taught you to ride and who gives you guidance now?
SD: "My dad. He has taught me everything in my opinion and I would never be where I am now without his help and support but believe me at times I have really tried his patience."

Rage: You were on the start list for the MXY2 series that runs alongside the Maxxis British championship but you never made it to the gate – what happened there?
SD: "Well there was a bit of confusion there. We were invited to do the event by the organisers and we thought that the 150Fs, 125 two-strokes and 250Fs were all in one race. It turned out that if I had taken part in the race I would have had to move up on to the bigger bike which would have meant I wouldn't be allowed to return to my 150F for the BYMX and other events. It would have forced me to move up before I wanted to so we pulled out of it."

Rage: Like many others you are now on the CRF150. What are your thoughts on the bike and the benefits or disadvantages of riding the four-stroke compared to the more familiar two-stroke?
SD: "I really like the 150F. At first I really noticed the weight and it took a bit of time to get used to but everything is running great now and having the Ohlins suspension makes it even better."

Rage: With the noise issues that surround four-strokes what do you think should be done to help save the tracks that are being lost due to complaints?
SD: "I think that the people who complain about the noise should come and watch a race and see what the sport is all about. If they took the time to come and see what it is and the dedication that the riders put into it then maybe they would change their minds. A bit of noise on a Sunday is surely better than the vandalism that can be caused by some youths that have nothing to do."

Rage: Extreme sports in general are enjoying a bit of an explosion in popularity at the moment – how do you see motocross moving forward as a sport?
SD: "I think that the sport is growing each year and the standard of riding is very high but motocross as a sport needs a more professional approach and then it will attract more and bigger sponsors."

Rage: Do you think it could ever get as big here as it is in the USA?
SD: "No, I think that motocross is very popular in the US and everyone respects what they do. I just can't see that the sport could ever grow to be as big in this country... unfortunately!"

Rage: Have you yourself been out there to ride or watch, or do you have plans to get out there in the near future?
SD: "I have been out there a couple of times and it's awesome. I have done the Mini Olympics and the Winter Amateur Nationals and the facilities are very impressive. As far as the future is concerned, well I guess we'll just have to wait and see what happens."

Rage: It must be nice to catch up with all your friends that you might not have had chance to see since the close of the season last year?
SD: "It's really good to start the championship again and to see the faces that I have not seen through the winter. Racing gives me the chance to catch up with my mates Lewis Trickett and Ben Field and have a joke around. The racing has obviously got to be taken seriously but between the races it's nice to relax and have a laugh."

Rage: It's your chance to say thanks now so who makes it all possible for you when it comes to motocross?
SD: "I could write an essay about all of the people who have helped me out over the years but a few people that help me out year on year are Woody from Smith, Archie Church, Sean Osmond and Dudley Witt. Also I could never have done it without the great support of my dad, mum and my sister who is still a pain in the ass at times."







MAX!

MAX AND HIS FAMILY RACK UP THE AIR MILES AS THEY VISIT AMERICA AND EASTERN EUROPE THIS MONTH...

I recently competed in the World Mini GP which lasts a week and is held in fabulous Las Vegas. With over 3,500 riders entered groups carry up to 400 riders who then have to qualify for the finals at the end of the week.

I was having some good races and was transferring though to the run-offs with top-five positions. In some cases I was leading but with a few bike problems and a bit of bad luck it didn't all work out as planned in the finals.

Leading into the Minis we went to Adam Chatfield's supercross track. I had some fun doing the triples and also had loads of fun free-riding in the desert.

When we arrived at the hotel in Vegas we went swimming with killer sharks! It was like a tropical island with a massive swimming pool and a huge glass viewing chamber with the sharks inside. There was only a sheet of glass to stop them ripping us to bits! I wasn't scared though – I live with my dad!

The day after the World Mini we flew out to Eastern Europe to prepare for the first couple of rounds of the European championship.

When we arrived in Bucharest I met the rest of the UK Team which was Troy & Dex Wharton, Tom Benett and Gary Linge. We then travelled to one of Romania's best tracks in Zarnesti which was where my first European championship and the Romanian and Balkan championship races were being staged.

Firstly it was the Balkan championship and I had a lot of fun – it's hard not to on a track like that. I had a great race with Bulgaria's finest, Peter Petrov. England's Tom Bennett got an outstanding third overall. In my second moto my seat fell off again, meaning I had to stand up for the whole 25 minutes. Dad thinks it's his punishment for the hard time he gave his mechanics or a sign from god or maybe Stefan Everts!

After that we then travelled to the best track in the world – Sevlievo in Bulgaria. It's so amazing and where the second European championship race is being held. I had ridden there a few times the previous year but this year was the best. They had mixed sand with the mud so it was perfect. After having so much fun on the best track in the world it was my 14th birthday.

We got up in the morning and it was so nice to not have to train and be able to just go out and ride. In the afternoon we all went to a big mall and into a really cool restaurant, then bowling and to watch Wild Hogs at the cinema.

Today Gary, dad and I went to visit Dracula's Castle in Bran, Transylvania. It was a fun place to visit and situated only a few miles from the circuit. I'm now just preparing for the race and this time I've sacked dad as mechanic and I've got Gary looking after the bike so hopefully everything will go well!

Max



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BLASTOFF!

THE 2007 SCHOOLIE SEASON STARTS IN FINE STYLE AND RAGE IS THERE RIGHT IN THE THICK OF IT!

With only two rounds of the BYMX series and just one BSMA championship round in the bag we're not much closer to figuring out who'll be #1 in 2007. However there's one thing we can guarantee and that it's gonna be quite close right to the end.

In the BYMX series there are two riders who are really standing out and they are 65cc rising star Ben Watson and Premier 125 rider Alex Rockwell. Both riders have only finished off the podium once in the first eight races of the national season which is pretty impressive.

Some of the closest racing of the early season has been in the 85cc divisions and we're expecting these classes to heat up further before a champion is finally crowned. As close as both of these classes are it's the BSMA SW85 class which has provided us with our first maximum of the year – well done to Paul Coates who dominated at Matchams on his KTM.

Next month we'll have even more race action as the Elite Youth Cup kicks off at Matchams and the BYMX, BSMA and British Masters championships all continue. Phewsh – it's gonna be a long, hot but very sweet summer!



Irish ace Craig Browne wins a Rob Herring training day



Blast off for the Premier 125cc class



Ben Watson leads the BYMX 65cc standings



Alex Rockwell's having an awesome start to the season



Scot James is fourth in the Inter 125s

BYMX series standings

65cc
1 *Ben Watson 325 points,* ***2*** *Callan Cooper 315,*
3 *Jack Heath 313,* ***4*** *Michael Eccles 288,*
5 *Matthew Callaghan 268,* ***6*** *Corrie Southwood 257*

SW85cc
1 *Matthew Fleming 335 points,* ***2*** *Scott Alldridge 321,*
3 *Jamie McCanney 308,* ***4*** *Rob Muscat 299,*
5 *Dan Thornhill 273,* ***6*** *Paul Coates 271*

BW85cc
1 *Sam Davis 339 points,* ***2*** *Josh Spinks 328,*
3 *Richie Worrall 312,* ***4*** *Connor Walkley 292,*
5 *Daniel McCanney 264,* ***6*** *James Hutchinson 263*

Intermediate 125cc
1 *Lewis Tombs 332 points,* ***2*** *David Games 320,*
3 *Nathan Rooks 297,* ***4*** *Scot James 293,*
5 *Ryan King 282,* ***6*** *Lewis Trickett 263*

Premier 125cc
1 *Alex Rockwell 346 points,* ***2*** *Lewis King 289,*
3 *Matthew Moffat 286,* ***4*** *Josh Waterman 262,*
5 *Aaron Smith 249,* ***6*** *Mel Pocock 241*

BSMA series standings

65cc
1 *Oliver Osmaston 176 points,* ***2*** *Corrie Southwood 172,* ***3*** *Liam Knight 158,* ***4*** *Joe Jefferies 143,*
5 *Todd Kellett 140,* ***6*** *Taylor Vernon 134*

SW85cc
1 *Paul Coates 180 points,* ***2*** *Dan Thornhill 155,*
3 *Thomas Rogers 148,* ***4*** *Luke Dean 146,*
5 *Lloyd Pettett 144,* ***6*** *Ben Howell 142*

BW85cc
1 *Josh Spinks 176 points,* ***2*** *Connor Walkley 157,*
3 *Luke Hawkins 152,* ***4*** *Richie Worrall 150,*
5 *Alfie Smith 144,* ***6*** *Jackson Evans 132*

Senior 125cc
1 *Lewis Trickett 176 points,* ***2*** *Lewis Tombs 168,*
3 *Nathan Rooks 158,* ***4*** *Will Worden 156,*
5 *Ross Keyworth 141,* ***6*** *Lewis Abbott 137*

Senior 250cc
1 *Josh Waterman 178 points,* ***2*** *Seb Osborne 164,*
3 *George Purchase 146,* ***4*** *Tim Burrows 143,*
5 *Rowan Hill 136,* ***6*** *Charlie Evans 134*

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HAPPYSNAPPERS!

WIN A ROB HERRING TRAINING DAY WITH RIDE MX IN OUR FANTABULOUS MONTHLY COMPETITION

Joe Beattie is one of Ireland's finest motorsport photographers – if you don't believe us check out his work at **www.joebt.me.uk** – and he's the man responsible for shooting this month's Happy Snapper winner, 15-year-old Newtownards ripper Craig Browne.

Entries are still flooding in as it seems you all want your picture printed in DBR and a Rob Herring training day voucher of course. To win a training day voucher of your own and to get your picture printed in Rage send us your favourite riding shot – maybe of you busting a berm, pulling a sick whip or simply gooning it up. If your picture is deemed to be the best by our expert panel of judges you'll not only win a Ride MX training voucher that's worth £75 but you'll also get your picture published in next month's Rage.

Because copyright fraud is such a serious issue we definitely don't want to see any watermarked shots you've stolen from a website and if you send us any of these we'll hunt you down and sticker up your spleen.

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WORDS BY BILLY MACKENZIE PHOTO BY SUTTY



SCORCHIO!

AFTER THE RAIN IN SPAIN THE ACTION HOTS UP IN PORTUGAL – ANY EXCUSE TO SLIP INTO YOUR SPEEDOS, EH BILLY?

HOW NICE is the weather? It's awesome – don't anyone try stopping this global warming thing they keep battering on about! In fact, instead of spending your money on trying to stop this beautiful weather, spend it on a nice pair of Smith sunglasses or some suntan lotion!

I wish the weather had followed us to Spain for the second round at Bellpuig. It rained non-stop for six days I was told and from halfway down France to the track it didn't stop once while I was driving. Saturday was called off and everybody in the pits were trying to keep their awnings from being a foot deep in mud and sh*t!

So Saturday was spent mostly making little trenches for our awnings to try and get the water away. It turned into a bit of a comedy sketch – me, Cairoli, Swanepoel and De Reuver all had our wellies on with our buckets and spades trying to outdo each other in the awning presentation competition! It was like being 12 years old again down the woods building dens and tree houses! Next round we all plan on building BMX jumps!

We were cut down to one qualifying session in the morning, kinda like the British championship. But there was no 15 minutes practice, it was straight into qualifying so watching the MX2 boys go out first was something to laugh at! They didn't even look at the track, they just nailed it from the moment they left the park ferme! They did every jump first lap without even checking how soft it was on the other side – I was scared for them! Seemed to be the right thing to do though – when I checked out the times everyone had put their lap in on the first lap...except Pourcel who took pole on the last lap!

It was insane! I was watching everyone trying to go faster and no-one was even getting within five seconds of their first lap. I found out later that Christophe actually had a bet with the Bridgestone guy about it. Apparently he was told he had to do it on the first lap but because he was TOLD to do it he deliberately didn't! He's so funny like that!

I'm guessing you probably know the results but here is a quick lowdown. I qualified eighth I think, crashed five times in the first race and had a 20th, then changed the set-up on the rear suspension and rode around in second for most of the race before being a bit of a divvy and choosing sh*t lines meant I ended up fifth. Nae gid!

After Spain we headed to Portugal where everyone meets up at a campsite close to the beach. I absolutely love it there – the sand is almost white, the waves are big and there is always someone around to go training with. Last year I took my bike onto the beach and played around on the dunes with Barty Marr and a few others but this time no-one was that keen – might be something to do with being chased by the police last year! We made our own fun though and me and Shaun Simpson got our Scottish Speedos on and had a wee splash aboot in the sea. Then after we got in, everyone joined the bandwagon and jumped in – I'll put some pics up on my website for ya to see! We even made a toy-sized Hawkstone Park in the sand for our imaginary toy motorbikes!

Next day I bought a bodyboard and met up with Stefan, Tyla and Priem down the beach again but Tyla was the only one who would brave the water with me so it was just us who tried our hand at body boarding. I was rubbish and couldn't catch any waves but Tyla was doing a good job – I guess I need to practice!

In the middle of the week everyone goes riding at this scary track in the woods. The weather was so hot you could hardly breathe and it's a really crazy track too – you can't see anything but jungle! You always have the feeling you're gonna see a big snake or spider run out in front of you. The track is actually really nasty to ride though – I don't think it's been graded for about 10 years so you have to be so careful and concentrate hard!

The race in Portugal was going really well and all day Saturday I was around the top three to five in qualifying and I am sh*t at qualifying! I was getting too excited about it really and when the day ended I was feeling a bit tired. Every session I had put in about 15 laps to everyone else's nine or 10, I just really wanted to have my name at the top of a timed session! I came close a couple of times but in reality I did way too much and I was a little tired on Sunday.



The first race I started 10th and I passed everyone to come through to third. I felt really good and was even keeping tabs on the leaders but halfway through I made a small mistake and went down. I kept the bike running but I lost a place and nine seconds on that one lap. I came back with a second wind behind Philippaerts and really wanted my third place back! But with the race almost over I went down again and couldn't start the bike – I was gutted! But I'm getting closer every race and my speed is there so I just need to be smarter!

On a good note though I'm leading the British championship now! I can't wait to see my bike with the red plate on it! I just hope it stays there!

Finally this month a big congratulations to Emma and Mark Jones – I got a picture message through of an ugly little critter by the name of Jake! He definitely gets his looks from his dad. That kid is gonna have one hell of a crazy life with Mark as his dad – he'll probably be running around the streets of Bridgend with an afro and no shoes by the time he's 12! Of course, he'll need a Scottish buddy to make it happen but don't expect any new MacKenzies anytime soon mate!

Well done Emma, you're a legend. And just so you know, me, Mark and Higgsy will make sure he gets the best education growing up!

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